



2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

104TH ALA NATIONAL CONVENTION

MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2025

Tampa Convention Center

Central Hall

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Video plays)

VOICEOVER: Never settle for it is what it is. It should be a mindset of it is what you make it. Got to get to Tampa Bay. Let's go. It's going to be epic.

(Video ends)

(Music played)

VOICEOVER: Please welcome to our National Convention stage: National President Trish Ward.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: How about that video?

(Cheering)

PRESIDENT WARD: Right? And you all played a role in it. You all know who you are. And there we were, all across America, getting here to Tampa Bay. And here we are.

Good morning. Good morning, American Legion Auxiliary. We made it to Tampa. We did. You know, my motto for the year was leading the way. And I've got to tell you, I'm so happy my travels led me here to you and our 104th National

Convention.

(Cheering)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm so thrilled to see you here in Tampa Bay. And I promise that the next three days will be filled with celebration, friendship, education and of course, heartfelt mission moments. Because for this national president, it was forever and always about you and the work you do.

As you saw from the opening video, this past year was filled with new and different experiences like skydiving and ziplining. But one thing remained constant. No matter where I traveled, my desire to see the American Legion Auxiliary lead the way to excellence and it was all about what we did. I am passionate about empowering our members and units so that we can continue to be a premier service organization for our military, veterans, and of course their families.

I've seen so many things, so many stories. It's hard. I got to get you out of

here by midnight, so I can't -- can't go. It takes inspiration, confidence, determination, and compassion to be the best. And no one knows this better than this morning's speaker, Steve Gilliland.

Steve has been recognized as a master storyteller, brilliant comedian, and one of the best motivational speakers I've ever heard. So many times, we say it, I've said it, it is what you make it. It's not, it is what it is. It is what you make it. It is what you make it.

He has dedicated his life to inspiring people through laughter and leadership. And today, I hope he can inspire you to keep leading the way to excellence for the American Legion Auxiliary. It's not, it is what it is. It is what you make it.

(Music played)

VOICEOVER: Ladies and gentlemen, let's meet North America's most award-winning speaker.

(Video plays)

VOICEOVER: Who's sitting beside one

right now? Purpose is the drive. Passion's the fuel. Pride is the definition of who you are, you take pride. So how do you know you're not me? Like me, you screwed up half your life. My men can relate to you. Do you wake up in the morning, love what you do, have the passion to do it, and enjoy the people around you and really savor those moments? It's not how you start this life, and it's not how you finish this life. The true joy of life always has been, it always will be, in the trip.

(Video ends)

VOICEOVER: Ladies and gentlemen, Steve Gilliland.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Yeah! Woo! All right.

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: Yeah! Good morning!

ALL: Good morning!

MR. GILLILAND: I am from the home of the six-time world champion Pittsburgh Steelers.

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: Where are my
Pennsylvania -- where's that department at?

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: Anybody here from
Texas?

(Cheering)

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Are any of you Cowboy
fans?

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: I actually don't mind
the Cowboys. You guys are harmless.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Oh, oh. But I now
currently live -- and I got to give another shout
out -- I currently live in North Carolina.
Yes, I am married to a woman that used to be a
flight attendant. And I'll just give you a brief
version of this. I can't take a lot of time, but
I met her at 37,000 feet.

At the time, I was working for a

greeting card company, and I was writing funny cards. How funny were they? Well, my personality sometimes has a little sarcasm to it, and our creative -- director of creative said to me, "How about writing some cards that might be a little edgy?" So, I just wrote a card, and he looked at it and actually said this to me. He read it twice and said, "You need counseling."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Well, see what you think. On the outside of the card I wrote, "I'm miserable without you." And then when you open it up, it said, "It's almost like you're here."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: That's -- look at people going, that's funny, I'm going to write that down.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Well, anyways, I was going through a very tough time in my life, and I boarded this flight, and the next thing I know, the flight attendant was very kind to me. So, I

wrote her a card, and on that I took a piece of paper, I folded it over and I literally handed it to her, and I literally had tears in my eyeballs. And I said, "Thank you so much for being so sweet and so kind." She said, "What is this?" And I -- and I gave it to her.

And again, she had no idea what I did for a living. And the next thing I knew, she stood there and read it. On the outside of the card I wrote, "I wanted to make you something special." And when she opened it up, it said, "But I can't, you already are." And then she said, "You should work for a card company."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "Well, I'll think about it." I got the courage to ask her out, I'll never forget this, and I flew down to Charlotte, North Carolina, took her out on a first date, because she said to me, "You're going to fly from Pittsburgh to Charlotte to take me out on a date?" And I said, "Absolutely."

Now let me share this with you. I'm a

blue-collar kind of guy from western Pennsylvania, right? You know, my personality, you know, the purple suit? Yeah. We got everything going on because that's, you know, the new book, *It is what you make it. Overcoming the "It is what it is" mindset's*, a purple cover, but my personality is like, I'm just -- I'm a burger guy. Last night at the Marriott; burger, fries. That's my dinner; burger, fries, right?

She took me to a French restaurant on our first date. And let me tell you what I don't do. I don't swirl it, I don't sniff it, and I don't sip it.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I throw it back. And the guy's talking to me like, he says, have you made a selection? And I'm looking at this wine list, trying to save face because I'm from Pittsburgh area and we drink beer.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And here's exactly on my first date, trying to impress a woman that

later become my wife, the very first thing I did in front of her, I said to the guy, he said, "Have you made a selection?" I said, "Yeah, bring her a glass of that pie-not in there."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And he said, "It's Pinot Noir." I said, "Well, go get it."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I thought the date was a disaster. I got back to the hotel. This was the pre-cellphone era. I called my buddy in Pittsburgh. He said, "How did it go?" And I said, "It was a train wreck." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I stopped at Wendy's and got a Baconator on the way back here."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: He said, "What'd you do that for?" I said, "She ordered salmon."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I called her the next morning, and I'll never forget this. When I called her the next morning, she said to me, and

I quote, she said, "Oh my God," she said, "I'm so happy you called me," she said. "Last night was one of the best nights I've had in 10 years.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "You went out after me?"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: She said, "No." She said, "I met you so many years ago." And you see, the part of the story you need to understand is, I gave her a card on an airplane, and 11 years later, walking off another plane in Charlotte, North Carolina, she said this to me. "Do you live in Pittsburgh?" I said, "I do." She said, "Do you happen to work for a card company?" I said, "I used to." She said, "Would you wait in the gate area?"

And you see what put us on that first date is because 11 years after I met her, the first time, she came off of a plane pulling a rollaboard with tears rolling down her face. And she said, "You don't remember me; You --

gave me this 11 years ago on one of my flights." And she handed me the card. She said, "I've been looking for you for over 7 years." She said, "When we first met 11 years ago, you were so positive" .

And then at dinner, she said, "I knew you were uncomfortable." She said, "I have a feeling you don't like salmon."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: She said, "I'd like to go out with you again." I said, "Oh, OK." She said, "I'm a flight attendant, I can fly anywhere." She said, "I'll fly to Pittsburgh." And I said, "That's fine." She said, "How about Saturday?" And I said, "OK."

And I'm thinking to myself, man, this is going fast, going fast, going fast. And then when I said, "OK, I forgot that, you know, I might have a few season tickets to a few of the Pittsburgh sporting teams back then." So, I thought, OK. And she said, "Where are we going to go?" I said, "Well, I'm going to take

you to see the Penguins on Saturday night," and she said, "Oh my God, the zoo."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: No, no, the Pittsburgh Penguins, they are playing the New York Islanders. She said, "What should I wear?" I said, "Dress casual, very casual." And she said, "Now are we going to eat before or after?" I said, "During."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "You're going to trade that salmon for a weenie."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And you won't be swirling it and sniffing it and sipping it. You're going to throw it back in a plastic cup.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: She said, "I can't wait." So, I said to her, "I'll pick you up at the Chatham Center Marriott, downtown Pittsburgh, right across from the old Civic Arena." And ladies and gentlemen, at about 6:10, I walked into that Marriott that night, could not find

her, could not see her. And I thought, where in the world? It's a sea of black and gold Pittsburgh Penguins fans.

And the next thing I knew, I spotted her, and I went, oh, there she is. And then I went, hrrr. Now, ladies, there's a lot of you accessorize. Beautiful earrings, lady in the front row in the red, yes. Beautiful necklace, right down front. But there's one accessory that makes me go, hrrr.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: She was wearing a ball cap. Mmmm.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: There's something about a woman wears a ball cap, and you got a little John Deere on there, oh yeah.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Throw a pair of muck boots on and we're going to town.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And she stood up and

she said, "Is this OK? She's got a ball cap on, a baggy old sweatshirt. And I'm looking at this sweatshirt going, oh my gosh, second date. True as I stand here in Tampa, Florida, second date, I'm staring at this woman. We're getting ready, I don't even -- I -- I'm like, forget the hockey game. I'm looking at her and there's this sweatshirt, and I'm like -- she said, "Are you OK?" Well, that's what the sweatshirt said. I'm going out on a date with a flight attendant, and she's wearing a sweatshirt that says, "Marry me, Fly free".

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I did, and I do.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Yeah.

(Applause)

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: When Trish invited me here, it was such an honor. Because I would just say this, about 50 years ago, I stood on a pitcher's mound, and I used to warm up. And in

that great State of Pennsylvania, that Department, I can tell you this, that 50 years ago, I was always proud to represent my team. And then I was honored to be one of the top 25 baseball players in the western side of that state, who played against the eastern side in the American Legion East-West All-Star game.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Little did I know, and some of you may not know this little trivia, little did I know that I would end up doing what I do, first my career path.

First of all, there are 82, 82 former American Legion, and I realize you're not the American Legion, I know you're auxiliary, but you need to know this. There are 82 young men who are now in the Baseball Hall of Fame who played American Legion baseball.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: And the reason why I bring it up is because of what I did before I went into the greeting card industry. I was

warming up the mic and a couple of guys -- and there was nobody in the room yesterday, and somebody said, "Hey, can you test the mic?" So, I went ahead and tested the mic based on what I used to do for a living.

Brown on second, Rodriguez on first, bottom of the third. Here is the 2-2 pitch on the way, just inside ball 3.

But I got tired and bored. I'm going to tell you what I found out. If you're going to broadcast baseball professionally, do it for a good team.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Anybody in the room remember Harry Carey? I love Harry, if you don't know who I'm talking about, Harry Carey used to broadcast the Chicago Cubs. And Harry --

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: Harry -- Harry Caray used to have a little habit. I heard you right over here. Somebody from Michigan, somebody from Arizona or Michigan just said it. He used to

like to drink, and he would drink and drink and drink. And by about the sixth inning, you'd hear him go, "Back here in the sixth inning, and Roberts --"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: One time I heard him say this, "Roberts is going to lead it off". Steve Stone whispered, "Harry, he's not in the game".

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Here's what Harry said, "Where'd he go?"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Spent time in baseball, then I went into the greet -- people are still coming in.

Hey, make sure this is the right event. This is the American Legion Auxiliary. I'm the opening keynote speaker, and I'm doing a presentation on time management.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Haha, yep. There's 4 people that aren't up yet.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: They're not smiling. Well, anyways, I am honored to be here. And when I wrote the book, it was because I got so tired of hearing "It is what it is". It is what it is. And I kept -- you know, I was born and raised with a mom who used to always say, "life is what you make it, son." It will always be what you make it. My mother was a God-fearing, King James Version, front row, Bible spit and spew-in, John 3:16 For God so loved world, you better have your life right, Baptist.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: That's right. And I got an amen over here. Mhmm. Yeah. Two more amens and I'm going to take an offering.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I took my mother on a Southwest flight. Anybody ever flown Southwest Airlines? Oh yeah. It's all open seating, by

the way. Yeah. If you're flying Southwest home, you know, do what I do. You get on a Southwest flight, pick an aisle seat about row 7, row 8, and then just start doing this; (making noise)

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: People just walk on by and nobody's going to sit by you. I had my mother in a flight, and I couldn't do that because I had to behave myself. She's across the aisle, and I looked at my mother and I go, what are you doing? And she just, angelically, you know -- and like I said, she is a God -- God rest her soul, she -- she literally is sitting there, and I said, "Mom, what are you doing?" She said, "Someone's going to sit beside me and ask her the gospel." And I'm like, "Oh boy, here we go."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: You know, this guy walked on the plane -- you don't make this stuff up. This guy walked on the plane, dressed real smart, looked at my mother, pointed to the empty seat beside her and said, "Ma'am, is that seat saved?"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: All my mother said, was, "I don't know about that seat, but I am." I'm like, "Here we go."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: In 2020, it was quite a year. In 2020, by the time March had rolled around, I was walked off of a stage in Cleveland, Ohio.

(Cheering)

MR. GILLILAND: The governor of Ohio -- you're cheering the fact that I was walked off stage?

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I know, I got it, I got it. Yeah, Hawaii's keeping me up here. Come on. But it was interesting because I got walked off the stage and we all know what happened.

That was on March the 13th. By Monday the 16th, my daughter-in-law, who lives in

Pennsylvania, said that they had closed the schools. And before you knew it, we were in the midst of something very, very horrific.

By Easter that year, I was in front of a computer with the little eyehole with my shirt off, and my primary care physician was looking, and she said, "I don't know." But she said, "We'll treat it with a steroid." For one week we treated what she thought was a bruise, something I had done in the woods. And then a week later she treated it with an antibiotic, she thought there might be an infection. When she couldn't figure it out, and we all knew what was going on, I had to go get an MRI.

Of course, my wife wasn't allowed to go with me, so I walked in very scared, to get an MRI. Three weeks after Easter, the MRI results came back, and she said, "I would actually suggest—don't panic—but I think we probably ought to do a biopsy."

And on May the 14th, I was diagnosed with late-stage cancer.

I got to the porch, I'll never forget.

It was 12:32 p.m. on a Monday when I got the phone call. Tears ran down my face. I got to the porch and my mother, who was not living -- she lives in Pennsylvania, I'm in North Carolina. My wife brought me my phone, and I said, "What? And she said, "Call your mom."

When I called my mother, here's exactly what she said. She said, "Son, you've got this."

But she said, "Let me tell you something. Every time you've gone through things, what have I told you?" She said, "It is going to be what you make it."

And she said, "The mess that you're in right now is going to be a brand-new message. And when you come out on the other side, this test is going to be a brand-new testimony." She said, "Be strong. Be strong for Stephen and be strong for Josh, be strong for Adam and Alex," my four boys. She said, "Be strong for Lucas and Avery, be strong for Kiptyn and Carter and Caleb and Collin and Grace and Kara," my 8 grandchildren.

But she said, "Most of all, be strong for Diane because she's going to want to trade places with you." She said, "Just be strong." And she said, "I think it's about time that you realize there's a book you haven't written that you need to read. And you need to write it.

People need to stop saying it is what it is." She said, "Son, you're about to go through something and it is what you make it." Then the piece of advice she gave me was this. She said, "Every time you go for treatment," she said, "Look -- have people look at you and wonder what in the world -- that he is so positive -- he is so --."

Let me share this with you. My mother gave me the motivational speak of my -- motivational speech of my life. And I left the porch that day, and what I remembered most was the last thing she said to me. She said, "When you go through darkness, when you go through challenges, son", she said, "You know what gets you through those?", She said, "Hope."

And she said, "Here's what I want you to understand for the rest of your life." She said, "Make sure people understand. Make sure these 52 departments understand that when you go through challenging times, people need to see the light at the end of the tunnel. And if they're going to see the light at the end of the tunnel, you have to be the light in the tunnel. Be the light in the tunnel --."

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: -- because it is what we make it. And too many times, in life -- you know, my personality is, you know, and when I started to write the book, one of the things I said to myself was, I said, "How do I want to start? Where do I want to start?"

Now, I checked into the Marriott last night and I love the Marriott. I'm a lifetime titanium member. I've been staying at Marriott hotels all over the world for the last 42 years. But when I checked in last night, a young man

looked at me and here's what he said. He said,
"How are you doing?" I said, "I'm doing good."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: He's like, "Whew". He
said, "What can I get you?" I said, "Whatever
you're drinking."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I mean, this guy had
energy. You ever run into a person, you asked
this question, who in the world hired them? Who
in the world, in an interview said, They're
lethargic, they're apathetic. They have a
terrible attitude. Well, let's put them at the
front desk."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: You ever been through
your favorite fast-food restaurant and heard
this?

Eh deh deh deh. You have no idea what
they're saying. You're at the drive through, eh
deh deh deh. Like what? Do what I do. Yeah, I
got my grandkids. I'm always like, yeah, I want

a chick-a truck-a oop da uh.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: It's like life is what you make it. But here's what we need to do. Magnify positive. Just -- I like people that are positive. I like people that are passionate. Stop giving people permission to ruin your day. Nobody ruins your day without your permission. Nobody. Nobody ruins your day without your permission.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: I went into a Taco Bell one night. You know what the kid said to me? He's laying on the register, like this. I'm in Lubbock, Texas. I'm in a Taco Bell on Avenue Q. All you from Texas, you know exactly where I'm talking about. And all of a sudden, this kid said, when I got to the front, he said, "Sup?"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "What's up? He said, "You need something?" I said, "I'd like a beef burrito, but I'm a little worried." He said,

"What are you worried about?" I said, "I don't think you've got the energy to actually go get it."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: You ever been around a person who said they're burned out? I'm just so burned out. I am so burned out. Oh, I'm burned out. Woman last night, I'm in the elevator, she was burned out. She said, "I'm so burned out." She said, "Boy, tomorrow's going to be a long day, too." She said, "I hope it's a good speaker."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: I'm thinking to myself, you're going to be surprised.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: This kid looked at me, young kid at Taco Bell said, "I'm burned out." I said, "Young man, you are not burned out." He said, "How do you know?" I said, "Because I don't think you've ever been lit."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: You can't burn out unless you've been on fire. Magnify the positive. What do I mean by that? What you do is you see life, and you focus. I have -- I'm proud to tell you this. I have not watched the news for over 15 years.

I woke up this morning. First thing I did is, I read out of the book of John, and then I did a little devotional with The Mornings of Jesus backstage before I came out here, while my video was playing. I just dropped my head, and I just said, "Lord, give me the words to say."

You want to know why? Because there's so much negativity in the world today. There's so much divisiveness. I tell people, magnify the positive.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Add value to things. And you know, it's a simple thing because, you know, my boys, I told my boys in life, you know, every time you have an opportunity, lift someone

up. Magnify the -- see something -- there's a woman that -- I saw her this morning and -- and I saw her again today. And I actually think I saw her backstage. First thing I said to her this morning, early, this was right after 6:30 I saw her, and I said, "Boy, that's a pretty dress." She just lit up. She just smiled. She said, "Well, thank you."

You magnify things and you make a person feel good. And all of a sudden it diminishes what? It diminishes negative.

I walked on an airplane. I was wearing this suit. The book was just released. And by the way, the suit is a gift from my publisher. And I'm walking on this airplane, this little 22 year old flight attendant, right? Now, you got to remember my -- my wife, flight attendant, retired American Airlines. So, I'm walking in this plane. This little flight attendant looks at me -- and I was the first on the plane. Don't do it now, but later you can Google up the concierge key thing on -- you know, I'm concierge

key with American Airlines. The old George Clooney Up in the Air movie, blah blah, blah. Just look it up. That's why I'm on the plane first, right?

Well, I get on there. Flight attendant looks at me. She said, "Sir, may I just say you are rocking that suit?"

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Then she looked at me and she said, "Can I get you a preflight beverage?" And she leaned in, and I'm sitting in 1(D), right, and she said, and I probably shouldn't say this, but she said, "You're handsome."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: She said, "You remind me of my grandfather."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "Young lady, can I give you a piece of advice?" She said, "Sure." I said, When you tell a man 67 years old that he is handsome, put a period on it."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Apparently you flunked English. That's not a run on sentence. Just stop it. But I tell you that to tell you this. When I got -- flew back into Charlotte and I got off that airplane, as soon as I got off that airplane, I'm being truthful, I walked off that airplane in Charlotte, still wearing this suit, going - (non-verbal gesture)

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: You know why? She made me feel like a million bucks. She made me feel like I was 50 years old again.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Because there's too many days people just see the negative. People just - they, they, they -- and they'll point it out. You know, they point it out, you know, and it's kind of like -- I'm always like, no, I don't care. With a woman, with a man, I don't care who you are.

Last night there was a gentleman, I was sitting at the bar eating my burger and fries, and he's probably in this room, he ordered three Mich Ultras -- three Mic Ultras, which I don't understand that. I mean, if you're going to order beer, order beer.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Mic Ultra, why don't you have an Aquafina and just call it an evening?

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Then he got a Jack and Coke and a -- an Old Fashioned right? And I'm thinking to myself, "How's this -- how's this guy going to carry these?" But I said to him, I said, "I'm going to check out here," and then -- and John, who was working the bar last night, I said, "John, give me my bill." I said, "I'm going to help this gentleman." And I took three beers, sat him down, and when I sat him down, I said, "You guys ought to be ashamed of yourself. He had to pay for this." And then I got to help him deliver it,

and they just all sat there.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: You magnify positive, and it diminishes negative. And when things happen that are favorable and good, you say something. You look at a person. This morning, I thanked 2 people for getting up extremely early. Why? Because I like my coffee early in the morning. And I said to them, I said, "What time do you have?" They said, "Well," one said, "I get up at 3:30 and I usually leave the house by 4:15." I said, "Thank you so much for what you do." Sometimes it's that little -- it's just something that magnifies it because we're so focused on the negative. If the coffee isn't ready, if the person isn't, if the -- no.

My son Josh, my -- well, let's just say this. I used to introduce myself that I had three wonderful sons, and another one. Haha.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: My son Josh was in the

third of the class in high school, which made the upper two thirds possible.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Some of you are just getting that, which concerns me.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: But he was a great athlete, exceptional athlete. Somebody said to me, "How did he do in college?" I said, "Well, you got to know Josh." I said, "The closest that boy got to 2.0 was blood alcohol."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: He was something else. But he was always my problem child, right? You know, he was that kid. He was like, Josh, come on, seriously? Well, anyways, Josh -- we're getting ready, my mom and I, we're getting ready to go into the mall. And I'm, you know, and I'm getting my mom out, right? I said -no, my personality said, "No, no, Josh, it's OK. I'll get granny." You know, and he's, he's ahead.

And then I see a woman, I'm like, oh, hold the door, hold the door. You ever done this with your child or grandchild? Hold the door, hold the door, hold the door. Be a gentleman -- hold the door, hold the door. He straight in like --

And I get up to him. I said, "Did you see that woman?" He said, "Yeah." Now my other boys would be, yes, sir. Josh, yeah. I said, "Do you think to hold the door for her?" Here's what he said to me. He said, "She wasn't within seven steps."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "What?" He said, "I have a seven-step rule."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "You have a rule?" He goes, "Yeah." He said, "If they're within seven steps, I'll hold the door. If they're not, I'm going in."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I said, "Where'd you

come up with that?" He goes, "Oh, I got a whole bunch of them, Dad, I'm thinking of writing a book." I'm like, "No."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: My mother -- my mother comes in -- up -- right. She comes right in behind me. And here's mom, cuffs me on the head. I said, "What'd you hit me for?" She said, "When's the last time that boy held the door?" I go, "Mom, I don't know." She said, "Does he hold the door more than he doesn't?" I said, "Yes, mother, he is a good boy." And then she said, "When is the last time you put your arm around him, after he held the door, and told him how proud you were of him?"

You see, son, so many times you see things that didn't happen. I see things that did happen. Sometimes you dwell on negative, I see positive. She said, "Son, do you remember the game against North Catholic High School baseball? He went three for five. Switch hitter, hit a home run in the second inning from the left side. Hit a home run in the sixth inning from the right

side."

She said the first thing out of your mouth after that game, she said, I will never forget. As we were putting the chair, she said, "I just do not understand why he swings at the first pitch. You -- you were focused on his third at bat." And I said, "Mom," she goes, "No son." She said, "He hit two home runs. He had a single. He drove in four runs and

the first thing out of your mouth when we were putting chairs in the car is, 'I don't know why he swings at the first pitch.'" She said, "Son, what you need to do is understand that life is not only what you make it, but the influence you have on that child is what he is going to be. Influence him. Be positive."

You know what else she used to say to me? She used to say, "Improve things. Make it better than you found it. Leave it better than you found it." When I check out of here today -- now, I'm doing a session this afternoon from 1:30 to 3:00. I told Trish, I said, "Absolutely, I will do it." It's called "If leadership is a

game, these are the rules." And for me, I said, "I will do it." And -- and by the way, I'm going to say this from my heart because of your president, I am doing that session because of Trish Ward.

So --

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: And it's, it's something for me that you leave it better than you found it, right? So, I won't check out of my hotel -- the Marriott has given me permission to check out late. I'll get about a 4:00 checkout before I have to fly tonight because of my busy schedule this week. But the last thing I will do before I leave that room is something that my wife and I started doing.

I was at the Sheraton Hotel in Atlantic City, right across from the convention center. It was 20 years ago, and my wife was with me. We were in a corner -- like a corner room at that hotel, and she said, "Hey, would you get an extra shampoo?" And I said, "Sure."

I walked out that morning and when I walked into the hall, I couldn't see the housekeeper, but I said, "Excuse me, ma'am", she was behind the cart, I said, "Can I get an extra shampoo?" She went like this. She said, "Absolutely." She said, "You only want one, you want two?" She said, "I got a good conditioner." She said, "Oh, and our lotion—our lotion makes your skin so soft." (Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: I'm thinking to myself, "Are you selling this stuff or are you giving it from the cart?" High energy. I looked at her. I said, "Ma'am, I got a question, what makes you so passionate and positive about hotel shampoo?"

She said, "Young man, , every day I wake up, and I'm still breathing." She said, "I realize something. I am way too blessed to be stressed." A woman --

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: Thank you. A woman making maybe a little more than minimum wage,

cleaning hotel rooms is too blessed to be stressed.

So, what did you complain about today? What did you say? Well, you know, it is what it is. I mean, you know, it's -- I guess it's going to rain every day.

Let me share this with you. It is what you make it. It is what you make it. And you know why you make it this way? That woman and I talked probably for 5 minutes that morning. I will never forget this. And I walked into my hotel room 20 years ago. My wife said, "What are you doing?" And I said, "I'm going to write the housekeeper a note, which I will do today, at the Marriott." And I wrote the note, and I said, "I just wanted to say thank you so much for what you do. I would not have wanted to stay here if it wasn't for you. I appreciate you."

The reason why I'm honored to speak in front of you is because I appreciate what you do. The support that you give families, the support that you give military, the things that you do. You want to know why I'm here today? Because

there's too many times, as there are people that are invisible, that need to be seen. People need to be seen.

So today, the housekeeper who is cleaning the 16th floor of the Marriott, I want to make sure --I want to make sure that she gets my note. But more importantly, I have never once -- and I'm going to challenge each of you to leave your mark, on this city, on these hotels.

I have never once at home got up and left a towel, a washcloth, or a hand towel on the floor with the attitude of she'll get it, she'll pick it up. All I could think about was that housekeeper 20 years ago thinking, she's going to have to come in, she's going to have to be on her hands and knees and pick up a washcloth between a toilet and a shower. Why? Because I'm too lazy to? Because I don't feel like -- oh, that's her -- no, that's not her job. That's not her job. It's our responsibility.

Why? Because we're in this together.

And I will take those towels, wash cloths, hand towels, bathmat, I'll roll them up and I'll sit them on the sink. I'll put the note on there, so she sees that. And then I will leave her a little something because I too am very blessed. But more importantly, I want to leave it better than I found it. Life is what we make it. And here's the -- what -- the challenge for you. Make it better than you found it.

And finally, my wife, I always say, what's your favorite chapter? And I've written 8 best-selling books. The book, "It is what you make it", I said, "What's your favorite chapter?" She said, "Create a Ripple." Create a Ripple. So many times in life, people in positions, people that are seen, they're the ones that we think make this big splash. And they do. They're like a brick hitting the water. And then there are those pebbles that hit the water. They don't make a splash. But you want to know something?

Whether it's a brick or stone, when it hits the

water, it creates a ripple and some days you realize you can create a ripple.

My wife said to me one day she said, "You you're amazing. The things that you've said and done for the grandchildren." I said, "Because I want to create a ripple. When I'm gone, I want to have left my mark in people. It's not about what I've left behind. It's what I've left in them."

My youngest grandson. His name is Collin. And yes, ladies and gentlemen, every department here, hear this. I have a favorite.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And he is my youngest. He looks like me. He acts like me. He smiles like me. And boy, his wit. Mhm. So, my son said, "Dad, Collin's last T-ball game," -- and this is, this was the end of June. He said, "Last T- ball game." I said well, "You know what, I'll fly up to Pittsburgh." I said, "I'm going to have to fly from there to Detroit." But I said, "I can make it." So, I flew up to Pittsburgh and I get to

the field, and I go to the outfield where it's safe. I'm not getting in with the parents. Mhm mhm mhm mhm.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And I figure it's safe because there's four women there. Come on. Right? Four women. And I'm hearing it already. No. No. Next thing I know it's the last inning and I haven't -- I haven't been in a T-ball game for years. But at this T-ball game, all of a sudden I heard the one woman go, "Oh my gosh, it's a tie game." I go, and I went like this. I said, "You're keeping score?" She said, "Yes." She says it's tie game, 56/56.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: A real nail biter there.

Well, anyways, I didn't understand the rule that the last batter in T-ball, if you're the last batter of the inning -- look at people shaking their head already, you're ahead of me. The last batter in a T-ball game has to - they,

they score. They just run the bases, right?

Well, the odds are that if Collin hits the ball, because he's the last batter, he's going to score. They're going to win 57/56. And I'm like, so this woman looks at me and she said, "Which, which one is yours?" And I go, "Well I don't have one." I said, "I've got a grandson." And she said, "Which one?" And I said, "Collin." And here's what she said. (non-verbal gesture)

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And I thought, the look on your face. Well, I know Collin may not be the most gifted athlete in our family, but I love that kid. And he -- he's just sweet as can be. And yes, Collin, at 5 years old, struck out in a T-ball game. Let that sink in. He swung 7 times. Never hit the ball off the tee.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Finally, the coach said, "That's enough. Come on, you're out of there."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And I'll never forget this. After the game, I looked at him. I said, "Collin, don't worry about it. Everybody strikes out." He looked at me, 5 years old, sharp as a tack, loves his baseball. And here's what he said. I said, "Everybody strikes out Collin." He said, "Well, Papa, you're the one that said good pitching beats good hitting."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: Collin gets up in that last inning and you got to see him, man. He may not be a good athlete, but I'm going to tell you what, he dresses the part. He's got eye black on. He's got 2 wristbands and he's up there like this, T-ball, but he's like this. He rips one into left field and I -- my heart just like, jumped out.

And I'm like, OK. And I'm trying to silently cheer. Go, go, go, go. All of a sudden, he's running to first base, and these four women are losing it. They're out of their bag chairs one -- they're up at the fence and

they're shaking the fence. Collin, go, go, go, go, go. He stops at second base. Not at second base. In front of the second baseman.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: They begin to talk.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: And I'm like, what in the world is going on? And they talked, and they talked, and they talked. The ball -- are you ready? He had hit in the left field. They threw it to second baseman. Second baseman missed the ball; it went into right field. Right fielder threw it into the shortstop. Shortstop missed the ball. Then the shortstop went over, picked it up, walked in, and then tagged him.

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: He's out. Game's over. Collin's with me. We're in the car together. I looked at him and I said, "Big guy, I said, "because we're going to get -- by the way, I see Dairy Queen, that's like a stop sign to me. I'm stopping." So he goes, "Papa, we're going to get

some ice cream?" I said, "Absolutely."

So, I told my son and daughter, and I said, "You take Caleb." I said, "I got Collin, we're going for ice cream." I said, "I'll meet you at the house." We get in the car. And I thought, I'm going to have to give him one of these motivational speeches his grandfather's going to give him. I said, "Buddy," you did all right. "But I got a question, man. What's going on there at the end?" He said, "Don't tell dad." I said, "Tell dad what?" He goes, "The second baseman's my girlfriend."

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: He said, "I had to stop."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: He said, "She's so cute."

I'm like -- And then he said, 6 years old, he said, "You'd have done the same thing."

(Laughter)

MR. GILLILAND: But here's what he said then, that I wish I had it on video. He looked,

he said, , "But Papa, when Dad said you were flying up to see this game, he said, I knew it was going to be special." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Because he it was our last game." But he said, "This just happened to be the best game we've ever played." And I said, "Why is it the best game you ever played?" And he looked at me smiling and said, "Because Poppy, nobody lost."

Wouldn't it be great if nobody lost? Wouldn't it be great as we move forward, the support of what you all do every day, that if everybody got together, because you see, if you weren't fighting to be right, but everybody was focused on the purpose.

See, purpose is what drives us, that's our reason, that's our why. But if we were all focused on that -- because, as my mother said prior to her passing, "Son, it is what it is doesn't exist." Ladies and gentlemen, it is what you make it. Thank you so much.

(Applause)

MR. GILLILAND: God bless. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: As many of you may know, some of you may not remember, but when Kris Nelson asked me to serve as national Membership Chair in 2011-2012, Steve Gilliland came and spoke to that membership meeting. I've known him for getting close to 20 years, and I have no idea how he and his company found my little company in Overland Park, Kansas, but he did.

And I really believe that God puts people in your path that he wants you to hang out with.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Steve Gilliland is one of those people. I'm so glad he's in my path, and I'm so glad he's here today because he's taught me so much and so many people had a part of why I'm in front of you today. And he -- he's one of those people. He's taught me the value of speaking from your heart and being genuine and being honest and speaking with compassion. And it's served me well. And I hope that you've

enjoyed him because he's a very, very special person.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: And for those of you who will be in his breakout session this afternoon, you are very lucky and it's going to be awesome. So, get ready for that.

It was a perfect way to open our 2025 National Convention, and he was so totally epic. He's right though, we do have so much to celebrate. So, without further ado, I give you our Merit Medallion Winners:

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Alaska, President Lori Fruhwirth.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Arizona, President Stacey Mayberry.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of California, President Linda Hayes.

PRESIDENT WARD: And give it up for the

Department of Connecticut, President Janice Sentivany.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Department of Florida, President Charlotte Bass

(Applause).

PRESIDENT WARD: And how about the Department of Hawaii, Irene DeVirgilio.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Iowa, President Verlinda Prior.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Kansas, President Tracey Kinnick.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Minnesota, President Judy Ackerman.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Nebraska, President Amanda Washburn.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of

Pennsylvania, President Tracie Selders.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Utah, President Michael Rasmuson.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Virginia, President Ethel Carson.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Department of Washington, President Diana Hagen.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: And the Department of Wisconsin, President Beckey Mueller.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: All of these departments represent departments that achieved excellence in membership, impact reporting, governance, financial health, and investing in the organization. These departments can be recognized in the crowd by their state signs, and the members of the departments will be wearing a Merit Medallion Winner button during national

convention. Be sure to congratulate them on their hard work. Let's give them one more round of applause.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I don't know about you, but between Steve Gilliland and celebrating our Merit Medallion winners, I'm energized and motivated to have the most epic national convention ever. How about we get the stage reset and ready for business so we can keep this celebration going? Let's do this.

VOICEOVER: Ladies and gentlemen, the 104th American Legion Auxiliary National Convention will resume shortly as we reset the stage and prepare for our business meeting.

VOICEOVER: Trish Ward.

(Music Played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Good morning, delegates, and guests. The 104th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary will now come to order.

Before we begin our opening ceremonies,

I would like everyone to please ensure your electronic devices have been placed on silent mode. I always know someone out there forgets to do it, so please make sure they're on silent. Thank you so much.

Will Jackie Robinson Unit 252's Color Guard, please post the colors.

(Ringing)

PRESIDENT WARD: How about that color guard?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our national chaplain, Monique Batiste, will lead us in prayer.

MS. BATISTE: Bow your heads. Dear God, as we open our 2025 National Convention, we pray for guidance and grace. Keep watch over our leadership this week as we celebrate the many accomplishments of our members. We are grateful for those who continue to carry out the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary and carry the torch by leading the way. In your wonderful name, we pray. Amen.

ALL: Amen.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Monique.

Please remain standing as past National President Kris Nelson's grandchildren lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by National Americanism Chair Christine Trahan leading the national anthem. And we will end with the reciting of our preamble, led by National Constitution and Bylaws Chair Norma Tramp.

(Pledge of Allegiance)

(Applause)

MS. TRAHAN: Please join me in the national anthem.

(National Anthem)

MS. TRAMM: For God and country --

ALL: -- we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America; to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars; to

inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy; to participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of The American Legion; to consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

(Ringing)

PRESIDENT WARD: It is my honor this morning to present the 2024-2025 national officers of the American Legion Auxiliary.

PRESIDENT WARD: National Historian Dara Oliver of Florida.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: National Chaplain Monique Batiste of Louisiana.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Central Division
National Vice President Rosemarie Hauck from
Missouri.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Eastern Division
National Vice President Lauren Lloyd of the
District of Columbia.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Northwestern Division
National Vice President Debra Albers of
Nebraska.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Southern Division
National Vice President Cheryl Shine of
Virginia.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Western Division
National Vice President Beverly Eads of Alaska.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: National Secretary
Linda Boone of Oregon.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: National Treasurer
Virginia Hobbs of Kentucky.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: And National Vice
President Pam Ray of Illinois.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: And please welcome our
special guest, Professional Registered
Parliamentarian Chris Dickey. And of course, I
can't forget my amazing pages, Kristen Hensley,
Chair Cheryl Estep, and Rhonda Kerr. And a huge
thank you to all the national chairs who arrived
early this morning to greet our attendees.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Good morning. Welcome
to your 104th National Convention here in
beautiful Tampa. It has been an epic year for
the ALA. So many lives were changed because of
the incredible work and dedication of our
grassroots members.

I'm excited to spend the next three
days celebrating all of our accomplishments.

Let's get things started with some very special hometown heroes. Please welcome to the stage, Florida Department President Charlotte Bass.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. BASS: Welcome to Tampa and the American Legion Auxiliary 2025 National Convention.

On behalf of the City of Tampa, the entire American Legion Auxiliary Department of Florida, it's my distinct honor and privilege to extend our heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you attending this convention.

As we gather beneath the radiant Florida sun, we reunite in the spirit of service and patriotism and camaraderie that has defined our organization for over a century. Nestled on the sparkling shores of Tampa Bay, this vibrant city is a tapestry of cultures, history, and captivating energy. Tampa is not only famous for its beautiful beaches, winding rivers, and iconic palm lined boulevards, but is also for its warm

hospitality and diversity in our locally -- family owned restaurants. You'll discover the heartbeat of Tampa beats within the spirit.

Tampa has a long-standing tradition of supporting those who serve, and it's especially fitting that they host the American Legion Convention this year. A place where service, remembrance, celebration of our life's national heroes are woven into every fabric of the life collective experiences and help ensure our mission enduring success.

To the volunteers, organizers and sponsors who have worked tirelessly to bring this convention to life, thank you for your vision, energy and dedication to the Auxiliary members representing every state and community. Your commitment has changed countless lives, and this gathering is a chance to recognize and celebrate your contributions. A warm, hearty pirates welcome to one and all.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Please welcome our

National Convention Chair, Jane Hardacre.

(Music played)

MS. HARDACRE: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. HARDACRE: The National Convention Committee welcomes you to Tampa Bay. We are so glad you got here safely, President Trish.

We want you to enjoy yourself, but keep in mind, Florida runs a tight ship. Your committee members are Mary Kelly Perkins, Vice Chair; Cheri Supp, Chair of Pages; Andrea Sherman, Vice Chair of Pages; Linda Teasley, Mailroom Chair; and Julie Bair, Vice Mailroom Chair.

(Applause)

MS. HARDACRE: Your Buccaneer pages are in the back of the room and around the convention center. We encourage you to visit Tampa and experience the food, water, sunshine, and the beautiful sunsets. Your committee is here to help in any way.

Some notable Tampa spots are the

Riverwalk, Aquarium, Busch Gardens, Ybor City, and the Tampa Zoo at Lowry Park. We are home to the Lightning, Tarpons, Rays, Rowdies, and Buccaneers. We recommend you try to experience a little of all we have when we call Florida home. Just be careful. Don't get thrown in the brig, we can't help you. We thank you for coming and wish you a successful shore leave.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Charlotte, and Jane. I don't know about you all, but we're going to have an amazing time just seeing them, those pirates. It's going to be awesome.

OK. National Convention delegates will be utilizing our electronic voting system. Your delegation chair should have already picked up your voting keypads before today's session began and each delegate should have a keypad.

Remember: The Convention Standing Rule Number 17 states that voting keypads are not to be removed from the assembly hall, and that each department's delegation chair is responsible for

all keypads issued to their departments. Departments will be charged a \$150 donation to the Veteran Projects Fund for each missing keypad, so be sure to count your keypads before you turn them in to the election committee at the end of the day.

Now, I was at the credentials meeting yesterday, and I know that there are, I think, 907 delegates here. And I figured out that if every single one of you lost your keypad, that would be \$136,500 for the Veterans Project Fund.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: So, there are trash cans in the back of the room --

(Laughter)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: -- but please do not deposit them there until after Constitution and Bylaws voting.

Seriously, we will be using the number 1 key for a yes vote, and the number 2 key for a no vote. If you choose to abstain from voting,

simply do not press any of the keys. Now, if you press the wrong key on the keypad, just wait a minute and then press the correct number. The keypad will only register the last key pressed.

Let's practice with a fun Tampa trivia question. Is Tampa Bay, Florida, home to the world's longest pedestrian walkway? If you think so, press the number 1. The world's tallest palm tree. If you think that's it, press number 2. The world's coldest winters.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Press number 3.

Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: We'll show the results. If you selected number 1, the world's longest pedestrian walkway. You are correct. It's almost 5 miles in length and in the Guinness Book of World Records. And I just have to say, before we get on with credentials, that was very appropriate music. I'm a kid from the 70's, and I know I Dream of Jeannie, and I know Major

Nelson found the bottle on a beach here in Tampa, right?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: I think so. And you know. OK. I got to get you out of here by midnight, I get that. But you know how you feel old? When the Girls State kids don't know who Hogan's Heroes is, right?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: All right. Next on the to-do list is the adoption of the reports which organized the convention. Hold, please. Voting. Voting keypads are not working? Rats.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. So hold, please, and we'll figure out what's going on with keypads. Stand by, and then we'll get back to our regularly scheduled programing.

So far, so good. All right. We're going to try the trivia question again. So if you didn't select the right answer, you know what it is now, right? Is Tampa Bay, Florida, home to

the world's largest pedestrian walkway? Press
the number 1. The world's tallest palm tree?
Press the number 2. The world's coldest winters?
Press the number 3. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. Here come the
results. Pretty soon I'm sure. Things are not
adding up. Now I can see. Hold, please. And we
will soon get back to our regularly scheduled
programing, which will resume after this exciting
commercial break.

How about that opening video, right?
And yes, before you all ask me if I was scared
when I jumped out of that airplane. Well, number
one, you don't jump out of an airplane. I
learned that from all the service members I met,
you step out. Jumping, stepping, falling,
whatever you want to call it. Yes, I was scared
and yes, I was happy to be on the ground.

Zip lining in Las Vegas over Fremont
Street, now that was fun. I know Shar is here
somewhere. Nevada, I see you back there. It was

so great.

OK. We're going to take a quick technology break, and that's cool. So everybody just hang, hang and we'll get it fixed. So stand by.

VOICEOVER: Flashing red, please return it to the back table and you will be replaced with a new one. Once again, if your keypad is flashing red, please return it to the back and you will receive a new one.

Please take your seats.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. Everyone, hopefully you've got those key fobs turned in. And as we've discussed all year, we're going to continue to do it today. Sometimes when things happen, it is what it is, right? No, no, no. It is what you make it. So we're going to pivot a little bit, but we're going to get on with the business of this convention. So everybody let's get seated and let's go.

Next on the to do list is the adoption

of the reports which organized the convention. The credentials report will be presented by Credentials Chair Sue Britton, Department of New York. But first, don't freak out if the key fobs -- we're going to do, we're going to vote a couple of different ways. We're going to vote by acclamation, and we'll do a standing vote. So if your fob is not working yet or you don't have it, don't freak out, it's fine. So please welcome Sue Britton to the podium.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. BRITTON: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning, American Legion Auxiliary.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. BRITTON: Madam National President, the credentials committee met on Saturday, August 23rd, and the following is our report: Alabama 11; Alaska 13; Arizona 22; Arkansas 9; California 26; Colorado 12; Connecticut 12; Delaware 11; District of Columbia 9; Florida 49; Georgia 13;

Hawaii 9; Idaho 9; Illinois 25; Indiana 41; Iowa 22; Kansas 17; Kentucky 13; Louisiana 12; Maine 12; Maryland 26; Massachusetts 13; Michigan 34; Minnesota 29; Mississippi 10; Missouri 15; Montana 10; Nebraska 22; Nevada 8; New Hampshire 15; New Jersey 15; New Mexico 12; New York 37; North Carolina 13; North Dakota 13; Ohio 39; Oklahoma 10; Oregon 12; Pennsylvania 56; Puerto Rico 8; Rhode Island 8; South Carolina 11; South Dakota 15; Tennessee 11; Texas 21; Utah 9; Vermont 12, Virginia 16; Washington 13; West Virginia 12; Wisconsin 25; and Wyoming 10, for a grand total of 907.

Madam -- Madam president, on behalf of the Credentials Committee, I move that the roll of delegates hereby submitted be the official delegate allotment of this convention.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Sue.

The question is on the adoption of the Credentials Committee's report as presented. Is there any discussion? Hearing none, we will vote by acclamation. The question is on the motion to

adopt the report of the Credentials Committee.

All those in favor of adopting the report, please signify by saying aye.

ALL: Aye

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no. The ayes have it and the credentials report is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Sue.

Rules Chair Corinna Colson, Department of Vermont, will present the proposed rules for this convention.

(Music played)

MS. COLSON: The rules are printed on page 22 and 23 of the American Legion Family program. Madam National President, by direction of the Rules Committee, I move the adoption of the National Convention rules for 2025 as printed.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of the National Convention rules for 2025 as printed. Is there any discussion?

Hearing none, we will vote. All those in favor of adopting the rules as printed, please stand. All those -- all those opposed. Please sit down.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Please sit. We're good. Please sit. All those opposed, please stand. Well done. There being two thirds in the affirmative, the motion is carried. And the rules for the 2025 National Convention have been adopted. Thank you, Corinna.

National Secretary Linda Boone will give the convention agenda report.

(Music played)

MS. BOONE: Please refer to the agenda that was distributed -- that was distributed to all the delegation secretaries during registration. The delegation secretaries were charged with distributing this agenda to their delegates and alternates. I move the adoption of the agenda as distributed.

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there a second? Thank you. The question is on the motion to

adopt the agenda as distributed. Is there any discussion? The question is on the motion to adopt the agenda as distributed. We will vote by acclamation. All those in favor, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no.

The ayes have it and the convention agenda is adopted. By adoption of these reports, the 104th National Convention of the American Legion Auxiliary is officially organized for conducting business.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It's a very exciting time for our organization. And before we jump into our national committee report, I am excited to announce the hiring of the new National Headquarters Executive Director, Ben Hendricks. Ben is a marketing professional who comes to us from Kiwanis International with a wide array of experience, business acumen, and strong connections to the community. We are excited for him to grow our membership and lead the organization to excellence in the coming years.

Please welcome Ben.

(Applause)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: You all will get to know Ben a lot more in the coming months. He will be starting with our organization on September 15th, and I know you all will make him very welcome. So please give Ben a big hand.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: ALA Junior members are our future. Department of New Hampshire Honorary Junior President Emma Davidson embodies *Service Not Self* with her many projects, including raising over \$10,000 for special Glider chairs gifted to the New Hampshire Veterans Home.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It was pretty awesome. I saw those Glider chairs. I was at that home with Emma, and it was amazing to see our veterans have some peace and respite in those chairs. She did an amazing job.

Let's check out her story and see how

one member can make a big impact for our veterans, military, and their families.

(Video plays)

EMMA DAVIDSON: My membership with the American Legion Auxiliary started because of my mother. She signed me up when I was 2 years old in 2009. And as I got older, I got more involved watching others being active in the community, going to certain events and going to our home post. Things like that. My father is an SAL member, and I get that membership through my grandfather who served in the Air Force.

AMI DAVIDSON: I'm immensely proud of her. Both her father and I are. Not just with the success of her junior auxiliary honorary project, but the consistency that she's put forth with the American Legion Auxiliary and really the entire American Legion family.

ROGER DAVIDSON: I'm very proud of her, and it hasn't been easy, but I'm very proud of her. And it's been a lot of work from our family and the Legion family. We've done a lot -- a lot

together to help her, and --

EMMA DAVIDSON: Being part of the family means a lot. I really love giving back and just knowing that I have people who are like minded that can support me in my endeavors, what I want to do in my future. You have lots of opportunity for community service within the American Legion Family Organization.

It is a great program that helps you reach out, and you can make connections later in life. So you might not necessarily want to go into the military or into occupational therapy for a nursing home, but it can still build you up the character and -- that confidence with public speaking. You're doing a lot of communication with the public and outreach and just you're building knowledge. You're learning by doing. You're making the world a better place. And you can also get recognized. Looking at colleges, they highly appreciate the amount of community service hours in the work you put in, so it's definitely rewarding.

This past year, I was elected as the state junior president, and when you get that, you have to think of a project that could serve veterans or their community in the State of New Hampshire. And when I was thinking of a project, I thought of the New Hampshire Veterans Home. So I kind of know some of the things that they might need. And one of the things was the recliner Glider chairs. Now, these chairs are special thermal gliding therapy technology. So basically when a veteran sits in it, you lock in place. The weight locks, and then you're safe, so you can rock back and forth without the risk of someone falling out. And then when you stand back up, the weight just kind of stops. So it's a really special high-tech chair that cost a lot of money. So I was able to kind of make that my project and raise money for them, which I was able to get about 8 chairs.

AMI DAVIDSON: I hope Emma feels really proud of the support that she offers. They see how she carries herself and the success that

she's had with her project, and makes them want to give it a try and do the same.

EMMA DAVIDSON: I definitely want to continue my auxiliary membership from junior to senior. I already am going to be the New Hampshire Veterans Home Board Representative for the State Auxiliary Department for the upcoming year, and I hope to continue that and just kind of be a liaison between the two communities and try to help each other.

AMI DAVIDSON: She reached out to other groups, other youth groups, to help her support the vision that she had for her junior projects.

EMMA DAVIDSON: The Race Across America is a program that happens in every single state, but in New Hampshire, we do something a little differently.

So the Blue Star Mothers, they put on this event at the New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery. So in the beginning of December, we helped put out the wreaths on the graves in the first week of December. And then the first week

of January, we helped remove the wreaths.

And basically it's a notification of, we recognize you, we see you, and we honor the fallen. And it's a really nice day. We kind of just go across the graves, put down the wreaths with the bows, and the whole community comes together. We have the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the 4-H members, and it's really lovely.

ROGER DAVIDSON: I think she is reaching for the stars because she's already done more stuff than I have ever done, so I am very proud of her.

AMI DAVIDSON: Someone in the community had nominated her for something called The Spirit of Hope and Kindness, and I think her Poppy Project was, was part of that and her volunteerism. Yeah. Just we're very proud of her.

EMMA DAVIDSON: Mom and dad, thank you so much for getting me involved in pushing me to be better in everything I do. You kind of just said, "Go try some things." And then trying and

believing got me to where I am today.

(Video ends)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'll tell you a little more about New Hampshire later. But what I will tell you now is that I -- Emma was with me at the cemetery retrieving those wreaths. Everywhere in New Hampshire I went, there was Emma. She is an amazing, amazing junior member. We're so proud to have her. Here to start us off by sharing the incredible work of our juniors is National Junior Activities Chair, and my very good friend, Jeanne Haas.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. HAAS: From east to west, Juniors are the best. And the members of the American Legion Auxiliary, ages 17 and under are truly the best. Although many of their hours are counted in other American Legion programs, the proof is in the pictures of the many junior members working the programs of the American Legion

Auxiliary.

In the fall, junior member Abigail from the Department of Minnesota bagged over 150 apples and helped deliver them to staff in 6 area schools during National Education Week. Many junior members distributed poppies and served as Poppy Princesses in their community. Grace, from the Department of Indiana --

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: -- crocheted Poppy Day for donations, collecting over \$2,000 in poppy donations for her creations.

Under the Americanism Program, several departments reported their juniors learned to sign the Pledge of Allegiance and showed their skills during events in their departments.

Juniors also took part in workshops on flag etiquette, how to fold and display our flag. A second grader, who is a junior member in the Department of Ohio, noticed that her school was not displaying the American flag correctly after she had attended a junior meeting where she had

been instructed on flag etiquette. After telling her teacher, the school corrected this mistake, and the school superintendent invited the junior member to have lunch together for her knowledge.

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: Training and mentorship do make a difference. Junior members took part in community activities, stuffing Christmas socks, filling Easter eggs, and beautifying parks and other landmarks. When junior members from Unit 6, Department of Delaware, noticed that female classmates were missing several days each month from their school, they developed the Period Project to collect and provide female products.

Honoring our veterans, Junior members helped in VA homes with gift shops, bingo, and holiday parties. Junior members of Unit 132, Department of North Carolina, partnered with their local Daughters of the American Revolution to create 22 "Our hearts sparkle for these veterans" posters that were placed in local businesses during the month of February. Younger

members also helped spread awareness of mental health conditions.

Andrea, an 8th grader from the Department of New Jersey, designed a T-shirt for our fundraiser that states, "Not too young to be the one" to bring attention to mental health conditions that have an effect on the entire family. And junior members from this Department took part in the PTSD walk.

Junior members from Unit 26 in Eaton, Colorado took part in a We Give a Ruck, a nine-mile march with a rucksack for awareness to support veterans' mental health and suicide awareness. A 12 year old junior member from the unit was one of the first five to cross the line.

The end-of-the-year reports describe many fundraisers and acts of kindness the junior members across the nation performed. During the past year, 1,954 junior patches were earned by youth from 34 departments.

Americanism and Poppy patches were the most frequently earned patches. Besides sporting

patches, 105 juniors and young SAL members can be seen in the blue version of this year's junior T-shirt, designed by John Joe Garcia-Reed.

Each participant at the five National Junior meetings received a special Leading the Way patch and this T-shirt. During the day, attendees made crepe paper poppies, learned about Wreaths Across America and parliamentary procedure, and heard from guest speakers about honor flights while making cards and fans for service projects for local honor flights.

A candle ceremony was presented by the junior members to the senior meetings to remind senior ALA members to continue to mentor and include our youth of our organization. The junior member of the year from each division opened the meetings and presented during the meetings.

The young ladies who will open the 2025-26 division meetings as Division Junior Members of the Year are:

Central Division, Zoe Crupper,

Department of Kansas;

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: Eastern Division, Emma
Davidson, Department of New Hampshire;

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: Northwest Division, Hayden
Will, Department of Colorado;

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: Southern Division, Grace
Billeci, Great Department of South Carolina;

(Applause)

MS. HAAS: And Western Division, Olivia
Thuney, Department of California.

Madam National President, this
concludes the remarks of the Junior Activities
Committee. There are no resolutions. Thank you
for allowing me to serve in this position.

May I have your consent to introduce
the Junior Member of the Year?

PRESIDENT WARD: Please proceed.

MS. HAAS: To bring greetings and
remarks, it is my honor to present the Junior

Member of the Year from the Department of
California, Olivia Thuney.

Olivia.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations.

OLIVIA THUNEY: Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. My name is
Olivia Thuney, and I am proud to represent the
Department of California, District 29, Unit 716.

It's an honor to be here today to share
a little bit about the journey that's brought me
here across our great country. But first, some
background on who I am and about the experiences
and relationships that have shaped me along the
way.

My path within the American Legion
Auxiliary has been shaped by mentorship and
small, meaningful moments that have grown into
many opportunities. I joined the ALA Juniors
about seven years ago from my Grandpa Joe, a
Vietnam veteran, and a Purple Heart recipient.

My mom has always been my biggest

supporter. She's pushed me, encouraged me, and most importantly, taught me the value of honoring and giving back to our veterans and their families. Because of her, I started volunteering in the kitchens on Taco Tuesdays at Unit 716.

Back then, I was just a shy little kid. But Susanna (phonetic), who ran the kitchen, took me under her wing. She became like a second mom to me. She saw something in myself that I didn't see. She helped me step out of my shell, and it must have worked because here I am today, speaking to all of you.

I'll always remember Post Commander Woody, who showed me what leadership within the Legion looked like, and five-time Post Commander Ernie (phonetic), who introduced me to more of the ALA family, helping me get involved beyond the kitchen.

As I became more active within the Juniors, I was nominated and elected to serve twice as the Honorary Department Junior President of California, continuing the mission of

community and service. Over time, I became more active in ALA events, building meaningful relationships and finding new ways to give back.

I was frequently called on to speak at events such as conventions, Girl State, Camp Hamilton, and DEC. It was these opportunities that helped me grow as both a leader and a junior representative.

This past year, I had the incredible opportunity to work on Sammy's Project, a tribute to my best furry friend who had recently passed. What began as a small effort to raise a couple hundred dollars to donate to a local shelter grew into something much larger, where we raised \$4,600, and \$1,200 worth of supplies to donate to Paws for Purple Hearts, a nonprofit organization that trains service dogs for veterans at no cost.

When asked to be a representative at California Girls State, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to the entire delegation about the ALA and our mission of empowering young women.

I've also had several opportunities to make donations and speak about the importance of Veterans' Day and Memorial Day at Camp Hamilton, at Veterans Memorial Park in Bakersfield.

All of these started simply as an idea, and with the support of my ALA senior members such as Mary, Aunty Marcy, and Cindy Mayfield, I've been able to accomplish more than I could have imagined.

This year has given me confidence and a better understanding of the process of what it takes to feel empowered in the role and truly be a successful leader. Over the course of this past year, I noticed that I find myself the happiest when I'm working on smaller projects, as I felt that those hold a deeper meaning. These special moments have the biggest impact of all, making others reflect and react to the small things that really matter.

As a leader of the Juniors, I'm constantly looking for ways to incorporate these small yet powerful encounters into everything I

do. I hope that all of the activities I've been involved in as a Junior, along with my volunteering for veterans and the ALA, will inspire others to step up and continue this cycle for generations to come.

These small moments and interactions with the Juniors and ALA members results in the beginning of a lifelong journey of giving back and helping to improve the value of our veterans, active duty military, and their families.

After all, a simple keychain can make a veteran smile. Handing out poppies and sharing stories can encourage someone to join the ALA. And spending one on one time with veterans can make them realize that the Juniors still care.

I am who I am today because of the mentors who believed in me and the many small experiences that have shaped my path. Their guidance and the lessons learned along the way are the foundation of my growth. Each success reflects the support that I've received and the journeys that have taught me perspective.

People often ask, how can we involve the Juniors more? The answer is very simple. Mentor just one Junior. Show them how contributing to the lives of our service members and their families creates real, tangible impact. They will see, feel, and be inspired by the true power of service.

I would love for more Juniors to have the same experience that I have. So let's continue to grow and inspire for future generations to come.

I'm very grateful for all the ALA members of my unit and the Department of California for guiding me along my journey.

Thank you, American Legion Auxiliary.

And thank you, Madam President Trish, for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to speak on behalf of the ALA Juniors.

Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations.

OLIVIA THUNEY: Thank you so much.

OK. I'm going to go hug my mom after this.

PRESIDENT WARD: It is my honor to present Olivia with the National Junior Member of the Year plaque for all the amazing work that she is doing in supporting our junior program and for uplifting other juniors.

Olivia, we're so proud of you.

OLIVIA THUNEY: Thank you so much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. We're going to get a picture. And we also have for you. One of my leading the way through the class.

OLIVIA THUNEY: Oh my goodness.

(Laughter)

OLIVIA THUNEY: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

OLIVIA THUNEY: Thank you so much.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your report, Jeanne, and for introducing all of us to Olivia.

So far, so good. I'm feeling pretty

good about the future. How about you? Yeah.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It is my pleasure to introduce the ALA Girls Nation Chair, Valerie Hardy, who will share more information about this impactful program. Please join me in welcoming her to the stage.

MS. HARDY: President Trish, are you from Girls State?

PRESIDENT WARD: Yes.

MS. HARDY: Well, so am I. Sorry, I'm a little taller than these people. Well, so am I.

And I couldn't be prouder of the American Legion Auxiliary Girls State leaders who presented 50 fantastic programs this summer. Giving our young leaders a thirst for democracy, Americanism, and service to our communities, states, and nation is the cornerstone of this prestigious program.

Our alumni become movers and shakers who also give back to the program. ALA Alabama

Girls State had Governor and alum Kay Ivey speak.

Susan Bysiewicz, the Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, attended Laurel Girls State and encouraged citizens to get involved.

And we mustn't forget Jane Pauley, who shared about her own transformative experience as ALA Hoosier Girl State Governor on CBS Sunday Morning.

These women are just a few of the outstanding changemakers who credit their experience at ALA Girls State with their success. We can all be proud of the young women who leave our programs and step up to make the difference in the world around them.

This year, over 10,000 delegates were selected to attend an ALA Girls State program. Yeah, that's pretty great.

(Applause)

MS. HARDY: In addition, almost 2,000 volunteers worked to make their programs a place where all were supported, enriched, and empowered.

Working on legislation, giving speeches, and forming their own perfect unions may be at the forefront of our programs, but we also take time to recognize and honor our veterans, active duty military, and our flag.

In California -- hello --

(Applause)

MS. HARDY: -- each participant received an honor button with the photo of a beloved family member, friend, or famous veteran. These buttons were not only treasured mementos, but were also great for starting an ALA conversation.

Colorado had a Gold Star staff member, and a Gold Star delegate share their stories.

Badger Girls State --

(Applause)

MS. HARDY: -- thank you, Wisconsin -- presented Blue Star banners to each of their delegates who had a family member currently serving. Please note the young woman on the bottom right, or I guess she's on your bottom

left. She has five siblings currently serving overseas.

Utah Girls State held a flag retirement ceremony that showed the way -- the correct way to honor our flag when its flying days are done.

And take a look at these JROTC delegates from Maryland --

(Applause)

MS. HARDY: -- who presented the colors in full dress uniform. What a great way to honor our military-bound delegates.

Our American Legion Auxiliary Girls State programs give young women from every corner of the nation the opportunity to participate in an environment where their voices are heard. And they are encouraged to reach for the stars and beyond.

From the over 10,000 delegates, 102 young women were selected to serve as senators at the 78th session of American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation in Washington, D.C.

Our senators came with federal bills in

hand, ready to present, debate, amend, and vote. Their bills ranged from the Full Dignity for Disabled Veterans Act to the Civic Engagement for All Act. Remember, these are 17-year-olds writing these bills.

Our days were packed with party caucuses and senate sessions, but we also had the opportunity to pay tribute to our American heroes.

We began with a monument tour. Then we traveled to Arlington National Cemetery, where four of our senators had the honor of placing a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Wednesday found us at the Twilight Tattoo for an evening of music and military history.

And finally, our senators met their senators on Capitol Hill and visited the White House.

If that wasn't enough, we also elected Maanyata Srikantam from California and Peniel Ogunde from Tennessee as our 2025 ALA Girls

Nation President and Vice President.

To quote my friend Trish, and we've all heard this many times already, our week at Girls Nation was epic. And I know our senators will be leading the way for years to come.

Madam President, may I introduce an honored guest to the convention?

PRESIDENT WARD: Please do.

MS. HARDY: Madam President, I am honored to introduce the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary Girls Nation President from my home Department of California, Maanyata Srikantam.

(Music played)

MS. HARDY: Maanyata Srikantam.

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: I was eight years old when I decided that I wanted to run for office.

My dad, ever the news addict, always had CNN on in the family living room. One night, I caught a glimpse of Hillary Clinton's monochrome suit and heard Don Lemon say the words, first female president. It was over from

that moment on.

At eight years old, my favorite book was called *Women in Science, Fifty Fearless Pioneers Who Changed the World*. And I was proud to have found my 51st in who I thought would be our first female president.

When Clinton lost, my dad turned to me. Ever the cynic, he said, "I don't think this country is ready for a female president, yet."

But my dad believes in his country's potential for greatness just as much as he believes in his daughters. And so with a smile, he raised me a challenge.

He said, "But I think you will be the first."

Hey, Dad, look where I am now.

I never believed that I would win Girls Nation President. In fact, I would have never even run if it weren't for my experience at California Girls State.

In the dorm rooms of Sacramento State University, for the first time in my life, the

girls around me were telling me that I was going to go places, that I spoke articulately, persuasively, and intelligently. That I treated them with a kindness that they had never seen before.

Their words meant the world to me. Their words filled me up so much inside that I was the first to raise my hand in senate sessions, that I would run across the cafeteria to tell a Shire candidate how much I believed in her, that I pushed myself to talk to a different girl in the program every single day.

As I did this through the program, I realized that suddenly I was confident, loving, risk-taking, like the woman that I had always wanted to be, like the first female president that this country needs.

When I found out that I had been selected for Girls Nation as one of 102 senators from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, I made it a pact with myself to continue embodying the woman that California Girls State

had enabled me to be at Girls Nation. And that is why I pushed myself to run for president.

But I had seen the campaigns that my peers at California Girls State had run for larger positions. Please don't get me wrong, they were all brilliant at it, the hand shaking, the advertising, the real campaigning. And I held immense respect for what their talents were.

But I knew that wasn't me. I knew that all I wanted to do was get up there and speak for as long as they would let me and tell everyone who I was, why I was there, and why I loved this program so much. I thought that my campaign strategy, or rather my lack of one, meant that I would never win president.

But for the second time in my life, the girls around me were telling me that I was going to go places. That even though I spoke softly, I could command a room. And that it was because I was genuine and honest and heartfelt. That even though they too at first doubted my unconventional strategy, they knew that I would

win.

I am standing here today as the 2025 Girls Nation President because 101 girls from across the nation believed in me. I am living proof that empowerment really can change the course of a girl's life.

That is what Girls Nation does, what Girls State does, what the American Legion Auxiliary does. These programs are more than mock government. They are the empowerment that young women need in order to keep breaking what Clinton called the highest, hardest glass ceilings.

On the second to last day of Girls Nation, we went to visit Capitol Hill, and on the bus ride back, I heard girls who swore the beginning of the week that they would never work in politics, change their mind and say, I'm going to give it a shot.

All of you helped make that happen. The countless hours and endless effort that you all put in this year empowered 102 young women to

know that they are the future of this country,
and it's up to them to change it for the better.

(Applause)

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: From the
bottom of my heart, thank you for giving this to
me. Thank you for the work that you do for young
women. It is because of you that our next Girls
Nation reunion will be on the Senate floor.

(Applause)

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: In the coming
year, a new generation of Girls State and Girls
Nation delegates will be in your care. With the
knowledge that I have gained from my Girls State
and my Girls Nation experiences, I want to offer
two ways that these important programs can
empower young women even more.

First, utilize every outreach strategy,
whether that be word of mouth, local or school
gatherings, or social media, to spread
information about your Girls State and give more
young women the opportunity to attend.

I am the only Girl State delegate from

my school's history, and it happened by luck. My school is actually affiliated with California Boys and Girls State, the American Legion's co-ed program. And if it wasn't for a post leader's offhand decision to switch me into the Girls State pool, I wouldn't be here today.

Many of the girls that I had the honor of attending Girls State and Girls Nation with shared similar stories, that these programs were unknown to girls around them, and they wanted to help others join this amazing program that they had had such an amazing experience with.

There are talented young women hidden in every corner of this country who could change the world given a little encouragement. I say we give them one full week of it.

Second, for programs that don't have government officials come and speak to delegates, I encourage you to do the admittedly frustrating task of contacting your government officials to come and swing by Girls State or Girls Nation. And not just the governor or the president, but

the treasurer, the secretary of transportation, the superintendent of public instruction, anyone in a government office.

It is a genuine way to get more women in government. Getting to hear what it's like in a certain government office, especially a lesser known one, makes young women think, maybe I want to do that when I grow up. Makes them feel like, maybe there is a place for me in government.

And, hey, if there is a government official that you really don't like, one way to get revenge is to have them come and unknowingly inspire young women to take their job and do it better.

My name is Maanyata Raju Srikantam. Raju is my mother's maiden name. Her father is Colonel Vasudeva Raju, a veteran who served in the Indian Army for 32 years. Srikantam is my father's last name. His father is Professor Srikantam Sai Surya Prakasa Rao, the head of Computer Science at IIT Bombay, one of the most prestigious universities in the world.

In my name, I carry the legacy of my grandfathers, two men who gave their lives in service to their country. I hope to carry their legacy to Washington, D.C., where I will become Senator Maanyata Raju Srikantam, or maybe even President Maanyata Raju Srikantam, --

(Applause)

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: -- and give my life in service to my country, too.

And when I get there, if someone asks me if it's my first time at the Capitol, I will smile and say, no. The American Legion Auxiliary sent me here first.

(Applause)

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: And then I'll say, by the way, it's not my first time being a senator or a president, either.

(Applause)

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: Thank you all for having me here to speak to you today. It's been a pleasure.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you so much.

MAANYATA RAJU SRIKANTAM: Thank you for having me.

(Applause)

MS. HARDY: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

But we do have one resolution.

PRESIDENT WARD: Valerie, thank you for your report on our Premier program, and Maanyata, thank you so much for being with us today. I had the opportunity to meet her and 101 other senators. It was just an amazing week. They are all equally amazing. So, well done, American Legion Auxiliary family. I'm so happy that our audience was able to meet her.

Will the Resolutions Chair please present?

MS. KINNICK: Madam President and convention delegates, Resolution Number 3, titled Girls State Leaders. Whereas American Legion Auxiliary Girls State leaders work throughout the year to provide an exemplary leadership program focusing on democracy -- democracy and civic

engagement. Whereas ALA Girls State leaders volunteer time, energy, and enthusiasm to power and educate young leaders across their departments. And whereas, ALA Girls State leaders promote Americanism, ALA programs, service to our veterans, active-duty military, and communities during their sessions.

And whereas, ALA Girls State programs have impacted over 10,000 young leaders this year to become more active citizens. Now therefore, be it resolved that we recognize the hard work and dedication of our ALA Girls State leaders with a standing ovation. The pre-convention Girls Nation Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted.

Madam President, on behalf of the Resolutions Committee, I move the adoption of the resolutions as just read.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of the resolution as just read. The Girls Nation pre-convention committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. Is there a

discussion? Are you ready for the question?

Being that I'm afraid of the voting
keypads, we will vote by acclamation.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Those in favor of the
resolution, please signify by saying aye.

ALL: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: Those opposed, please
signify by saying no. The ayes have it, and the
resolution is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: So in honor of our
Girls State directors, please stand for their
standing ovation.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Please join me in
extending a very warm welcome to the brother I
always wanted and finally got, our sons of the
American Legion National Commander, Joseph
Navarreté.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. NAVARRETÉ: National officers, distinguished guests, and members of our great American Legion Family, it is an honor to stand before you today in Tampa Bay. It has been a year of travel, service, and unwavering commitment to the four pillars of our organization. From the most solemn grounds of our nation to the vibrant heart of our local communities, we have carried on the banner of the Sons of American Legion with pride.

Our first and most sacred duty is to honor those who have served and sacrificed. We remember the enduring legacy of heroes like Chaplain George Fox; one of the four chaplains whose selfless act is the cornerstone of our values. We were there in our nation's capital, for the historic dedication of the World War I memorial, ensuring that 4.7 million Americans who served in the war are never forgotten.

We participated in solemn remembrances

for Pearl Harbor, and we gathered for our annual Washington Conference where we had the profound honor of laying wreaths at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and our nation's most sacred war memorials. On Memorial Day, we returned to Washington, D.C. not for a holiday, but for a holy day to pay respects and ensure the meaning of that day is never forgotten.

Our solemn vow to leave no one behind is more powerfully embodied by the work of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or DPAA. We wholeheartedly support their tireless global mission to recover and identify the nation's heroes, providing answers to families who have waited decades for closure. The DPAA's unwavering commitment ensures our country keeps its promise, and we are proud to champion their sacred work.

But our strength is not just in national ceremonies, it is forged in the heart of America. In the detachments and squadrons, our service extends into the very homes where our

veterans are cared for. Our squadrons are on the ground providing comfort items, hosting meals, and most importantly, giving the gift of their time. This hands-on support is a vital part of our mission, a direct lifeline that shows our heroes they are respected, remembered, and never alone.

As we honor the past and serve the present, we must always be building the future. We do this by championing our youth and promoting one hundred percent Americanism. We have strengthened the bonds of our entire Legion family and showcased the critical Be the One initiative to a massive audience, a mission to end veteran suicide that we all must embrace. Your Sons have set the bar by having over 214,000 members taking the pledge.

(Applause)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: We are showing our commitment to this vital endeavor, and I would like to thank a few departments and detachments, Alabama, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin for having a

hundred percent in pledges.

(Applause)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: Your Sons continue to do what we do best. In total, Sons donated over \$111,000 this weekend alone and over \$12 million to various Legion programs combined throughout this year.

(Applause)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: We all know that this mission is not just about money. It's about making a real difference in the lives of those who have sacrificed for us. As Sons of the American Legion, we stand firm in that commitment, and I know we will continue to rise to meet the challenges ahead.

Brothers and sisters, it has been a remarkable year. From coast to coast, we have demonstrated what it means to be a son of the American Legion and part of the Legion family. We have honored our heroes, served our communities, and invested in our future. While our convention has just completed, I hope you

have an amazing convention this week and we all become re-energized, rededicated to the timeless principles that guide us.

I want to thank you for allowing me to address you this morning and thank you for your service and everything you always do. And I want to take a small moment of personal privilege before I leave you with my last line. I want to say to my mother who's watching, I wouldn't be here without you. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: And I'll leave you with a last thought, part of what I -- I took from her session, "Todo es posible con Dios y familia." Everything is possible with God and family. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. NAVARRETÉ: I have a small gift for your president. It's fragile, so be careful.

PRESIDENT WARD: Oh, it's fragile.

MR. NAVARRETÉ: Fragile.

PRESIDENT WARD: I won't drop the baby.

Oh, it's beautiful. It's a beautiful holiday globe.

MR. NAVARRETÉ: Wait, wait. There we go.

PRESIDENT WARD: It's a balloon.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Oh, how cool.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Joseph.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: My Spanish is -- is not too good. The ladies in Puerto Rico really tried to work with me. But one thing I do know, and that's "familia," and we were absolutely a Legion "familia" this year.

Connecting the visual image of the poppy with the sacrifice of service made by our veterans has been an important goal of the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program since its inception in 1921.

Before we proceed -- one moment, please. Hold, please, and then we will get back to our regularly scheduled programing.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Yeah, yeah. Thank you for your patience and understanding. We're blowing the cobwebs out, but we're good, right? Hey, I've been to so many different department conventions, and we all know that the agenda moves around a little bit. So thank you for your patience and understanding. We got this.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: An Air Force veteran, James LaCoursiere Jr. has been a longtime field representative for the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines Fund of Connecticut, which financially assists veterans and their families in need. As National Commander, LaCoursiere strongly committed to raising awareness for the American Legion's Be the One mission to prevent veteran suicide.

It is my privilege to invite to the stage a leader whose personal commitment embodies the spirit of The American Legion. I always wanted a brother, now I finally got two. Please

join me in welcoming our National Commander,
James LaCoursiere Jr.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MR. LACOURSIERE: Good morning,
American Legion Auxiliary.

ALL: Good morning.

MR. LACOURSIERE: Now, it truly is a
great honor and privilege to be here before you
and everything. And I'm actually going to keep
my remarks short because I only have two days and
a wake up, so --

(Laughter)

MR. LACOURSIERE: But I want to try to
keep you all on schedule and everything, but I --
I just wanted to have the opportunity to come out
here and spend a couple of minutes with your
national officers, your national staff, and the
American Legion Auxiliary.

I want to say thank you. Thank you for
all that you do, in the past, today, and in the
future. But most of all, I sincerely say thank

you because you do it with conviction. You do it from the heart. And I can say that because in our travels, which we had -- I truly believe as a family, which we represented as a family very well, the fun -- the fun The American Legion has together, The American Legion Family, that is.

We served with purpose. We served with a mission. But I was really recharged when I sat back, and I went into various departments. I had a very -- not I -- we had a very unique year because of Mother Nature. And I'm going to take a moment and share with you. Because of Mother Nature, we actually got to see the true strength and integrity and purpose of the American Legion family.

When we go into areas that were heavily devastated, and I'm talking very seriously, heavily devastated, and you see the American Legion family being an integral part in that community, literally working their butts off. They stepped in and they filled that gap where FEMA was not there to assist. I'm -- sometimes

the way I speak gets me in trouble, but I'm going to say it the way it is, and I'm going to speak from the heart.

The American Legion family stepped up to take care of their neighbors, to take care of the strangers they never met. They were there for their community. They did what we have in our preamble, for community, state, and nation.

(Applause)

MR. LACOURSIERE: This is what the American Legion family is all about. We don't sit back, and we don't wait for Congress to go ahead and sit back and say, well, it's OK if you take care of that or we'll get back to you next week. We take action now because that action is needed. We are there for our brothers and sisters. We are there for our active duty and their families. We are there for the veterans and their families.

I'm very passionate about all the values and purposes of the American Legion, and that's why I sat back, and I coined my phrase a

couple of years back. My secondary theme during the year, which is based on love. My true love and commitment to the values and purposes of The American Legion Family, and that love I talk about is L-U-V, loyalty, unity, and valor. To me, that is what the American Legion is.

(Applause)

MR. LACOURSIERE: At all times, we kept in the forefront of our minds and our hearts The American Legion Family's number one mission. And it's a mission. It's not a program. It's not a phrase. It's not something that looks impressive on a billboard or even on a commander's pin, but -- but they are sharp, though. But --

(Laughter)

MR. LACOURSIERE: But it truly is a mission. It's a mission to be the one. To be the one to save a life of a veteran, their spouse, even that stranger in your community who we have not yet met. Together, we all can be the one. The American Legion Family and our Be the

One mission, as my dear friend Past National Commander Dan Seehafer always said, "It's about changing lives and saving lives. And that is what we do. We will save one life at a time."

(Applause)

MR. LACOURSIERE: My focus during the year has been on the quality of life. The quality of life of our active duty and their families, our veterans, and their families. We - - when we went into military installations and we went to VA facilities and even into communities, we wanted to let them know that we give a damn about you, and we want to know the truth of what's really going on, what we can do to help you out.

And then they look at you and say, "Well, what do you mean what you can do?" We let them know that as the world's largest and proudest veteran service organization that we carry a strong, impressive voice with Congress. We want to be that extended voice with Congress. I let everybody know that The American Legion

Family, we are the face and voice for our veterans and their families, are we not?

(Applause)

MR. LACOURSIERE: Well, I'm not going to burn up the extra half hour that -- sorry.

(Laughter)

MR. LACOURSIERE: But no, like I said, "I just wanted to sincerely come out here, try to look at everybody in the eyes, but there's a lot more than I thought there would be."

(Laughter)

MR. LACOURSIERE: I just want to sincerely say thank you. And I want my heart to touch your hearts and sincerely say thank you. God bless each and every one of you. May God bless you and oversee you having a great convention, and may God bless the great United States of America. Thank you everybody.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: So of course you know that Commander LaCoursiere is a man of his word. We were barely installed when things started

happening -- floods, hurricanes, fires -- and he was there. He was in the trenches. And recently I was at Ramstein and Landstuhl, and he had been there slightly before my trip and was concerned about the quality of the mattresses at Landstuhl. And I'd like to believe that his concern made a difference because when I got there, those mattresses were brand new. That's right.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Connecting the visual image of the poppy with the sacrifice of service made by our veterans has been an important goal of the American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program since its inception in 1921. Let's take a look.

(Video played)

VOICEOVER: National Poppy Day actually became a thing, so to speak, in 2017. The American Legion asked Congress to declare the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. And that's really how the term National Poppy Day got started.

VOICEOVER: There are many programs

within the American Legion family, but truly, the one that's so meaningful to our members is Poppy Day.

VOICEOVER: The poppies were growing wild in Flanders Field, and it represents the blood of the people that died there. And it really is a commemorative flower that everybody recognizes as part of the Legion family.

VOICEOVER: As they were turning the ground over to bury the dead over there, poppies would continue to grow. When Colonel John McCrae wrote the poem *In Flanders Fields*, that's pretty much where it came from. And you listen to it, and you really realize that our roots go so far back.

VOICEOVER: Everybody wants their poppies by National Poppy Day, so we are working extra hard to make sure that our units get them.

VOICEOVER: The State of Wisconsin is unique. We are one of the few states that still has veterans actually coming in and hand making the poppies. To be able to say that they are

handmade by veterans, we're very proud of that.

VOICEOVER: It takes a lot of patience, and it takes a lot of concentration to be able to do that, to make it as beautiful as they are.

VOICEOVER: A good share of the money that we raise goes to feeding the homeless veterans, for the meal that we prepare them once a month.

VOICEOVER: Every penny that's raised goes to help a veteran or their family. The Auxiliary pays the administrative costs for the program, so every penny we raise gets directly to aid a veteran or an active-duty military member.

VOICEOVER: I think if the veterans were not around, it would be a huge loss for the young people in the community. I -- I don't think they realize that these were actual people that fought these wars for them. They might read it in a history book, they might see movies, but they don't realize that those actors, those characters, are real people.

VOICEOVER: There are people out there

who have served, and your -- your freedom and what you enjoy in this country came from these people serving their time in the military.

VOICEOVER: It's the beginning of summer. We go out, we have parties, we do this and that, but we want to make sure that people remember why we observe Memorial Day. We observe Memorial Day to honor those people that gave their life for this country, that gave us the freedom that we can be out there and have those parties. It's because of those veterans that we can do that.

VOICEOVER: Being a veteran myself, I understand what some of these guys have gone through or are going through. Whatever I can do to help, you know, I'm there. It's -- I feel it's my duty.

VOICEOVER: Wear a poppy, honor a veteran, and not just on Memorial Day. Wear a poppy every day. You never know who is going to ask you about it and never know when you're going to have the opportunity to tell someone else what

it's about.

(Video ends)

PRESIDENT WARD: I love that video.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Before I introduce our national Poppy chairman, I just want to take a moment of personal privilege and share with you all. There's so many stories, but when I was in the Department of Georgia, I actually held Moina Michael's original poppy, and it was so inspiring to see it and hold it and -- and feel the energy from that poppy, all that her idea started. And I saw the wild poppies growing in France.

So this legacy that we carry is going to continue to grow, and our beautiful poppy will forever endure, I know that. Please welcome National Poppy Committee Chair Diana Sirovina.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. SIROVINA: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

MS. SIROVINA: Madam National

President, for over a century, the Poppy Program has been one of our most visible programs. Through our poppy distributions, we not only honor the lives of those who sacrificed so much for our freedom, but we educate our communities and our youth as well. Auxiliary members also promoted the Poppy Program in many ways, including Little Miss Poppy contest, Poppy Poster Contest, and Poppy craft projects.

Members all over the country use their artistic talents to create amazing poppy crafts, poppy note cards, centerpieces, wreaths, ornaments, picture frames, quilts, bandanas for dogs, and even a poppy snowman were created to showcase the poppy and raise awareness of the many ways poppy donations are used to support our veterans.

And then there were the poppy hats. From California to Oklahoma, Minnesota to Puerto Rico, poppy hats were everywhere. Some were cute and playful, while others were quite stylish and elegant. The Department of Puerto Rico donated

an entire day to poppy activities, with their Poppy hat contest being the highlight of the day.

The departments of California and Michigan reported that members made yummy poppy cookies to enjoy at their meetings. One unit in Ohio made poppy cookies for several kindergarten classes. The children nibbled on the cookies while auxiliary members told the story of the poppy.

Telling the story of the Poppy Lady was an important part of the program again this year. Units went into classrooms, libraries, and community events to talk about Ms. Moina Michael and how the Poppy Program got its start. On Memorial Day, the Department of Georgia, birthplace of Ms. Michael, held a very special poppy ceremony, releasing a huge anchor covered with over 11,000 poppies into a nearby lake in remembrance of those service members lost at sea.

Since 2021, the American Legion Auxiliary has had a formal partnership with Honor Flight. It allows us to use Poppy funds to help

celebrate America's veterans by flying them to Washington, D.C. to see their memorials. The Department of Indiana had a special fundraiser. They had a poppy contest at their spring conference that raised over \$6,000 for the Honor Flight network.

In 2017, the American Legion asked Congress to designate the Friday before Memorial Day as National Poppy Day. Every year since, members all over the country have gone out into their communities to distribute those beautiful little red flowers and remind Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms.

This year was certainly no exception. Whether it was one or two members standing outside a local business or larger groups with elaborate displays, our members were out in force, distributing hundreds of our beautiful red poppies and raising thousands of dollars to benefit our veterans.

This year, many units included Poppy

Ambassadors in their distribution days. Poppy Ambassadors are Auxiliary and Sons of the American Legion members very -- ages very young to 17. It was a great way to get our younger members involved and people just can't resist those adorable kids.

Reports from all 52 departments showed that our members fulfilled our mission to help veterans in countless ways. Whether it was the basics like underwear and socks, personal items, and toiletries, or donation to the Armed Services YMCA to help service members experiencing food insecurities. Day after day, all over the country, our members made a difference in the lives of our veterans, active-duty service members, and their families through funds raised from their poppy distributions.

Remember: Every day is poppy day. Every day we recognize a veteran. Every day we can do something to help a veteran and bring that to the community and let people see what we are about. Every day is poppy day.

Madam President, may I please introduce this year's Little Miss Poppy?

PRESIDENT WARD: Please do.

MS. SIROVINA: Thank you. I am pleased to introduce Kinsey Kuhlman from the Department of Ohio.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. SIROVINA: Kinsey -- Kinsey is a member of the Slusser Unit 63 in Ottawa, Ohio.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MISS KUHLMAN: Hi, my name is Kinsey Kuhlman. I'm a 5th grade student at Sts. Peter and Paul's School in Ottawa, Ohio. I have been chosen as the 2024-2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Miss Poppy. I am here representing the Kerner-Slusser Unit Number 63, in Ottawa, Ohio.

First off, I would like to thank you for inviting me here to beautiful Tampa, Florida and allowing me to speak to you all. I would also like to thank the Ottawa American Legion

Auxiliary Unit 63 for supporting me in this journey for the last year and a half. Without them, I would not be here and more importantly, would not have been able to raise the amount of money and awareness as we were able to accomplish.

My great grandpa, Dave Yoder (phonetic), served in the Korean War from 1952 to 1954, and was the Putnam County Veteran of the year in 2021. My great grandpa, Roy Kuhlman, also served in the Army and served in France during World War II, and was an active member of the American Legion. My grandpa, Kevin Garrick (phonetic), is a veteran of the United States Navy. They were my inspiration for getting involved in the Poppy Program.

On September 27th, 1920, the poppy became the official flower of the American Legion family to memorialize the soldiers who fought and died during the war. Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the distribution of poppies becoming a national program of The American

Legion.

My journey started on April 7th, 2024, when I visited the Poppy Shop in Sandusky, Ohio. There, veterans make each poppy with love and care. I share the story of the poppy with my community in different ways. First, I include the history of poppy and its significance in my speech that I presented at each met -- meeting that I attended.

I also explained what the poppy represents while in the community receiving donations in exchange for poppies. Many people who donated asked me questions about what the poppy was and what the money donated would be used for. I explained that the donations went towards supporting veterans in our community. I enjoyed sharing my knowledge of the poppy with the community. I was able to donate over \$2,000 to our local American Legion Auxiliary unit.

(Applause)

MISS KUHLMAN: During my time as Miss Poppy, I learned all about how much veterans

really did for us. I learned that even though many people overlook it, some veterans really did give up their whole lives for you and me. I learned about the poppy, and it helped me realize what we all owe to the veterans who served our country. Now that I know these things, I respect this program, and everyone involved in it, so much more.

I'm extremely thankful for all who donated, and I hope all the future Miss Poppy's appreciate being a part of all these amazing activities as much as I did. For me, the poppy is a visible reminder of those who served our country and those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

I've been attending the Memorial Day parade and meal afterwards with my great grandpa since I was born and always enjoyed donating to Miss Poppy. It has been a goal of mine to become Miss Poppy, and I'm so thankful to have been given the opportunity. The poppy in this program will forever hold a special place in my heart.

Now, in closing, I would like to recite
the poem *In Flanders Fields*:

"In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved, and were loved, and now we
lie, In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields."

Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae,

December 8th, 1915.

Thank you all for your time, and God

bless America.

(Applause)

MS. SIROVINA: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks. However, we do have a resolution.

Will the Resolutions Chair please present?

MS. KINNICK: Madam President and convention delegates, Resolution Number 2, titled Poppy Fund Expansion. Whereas since 2014, the American Legion NEC has designated approved use of poppy funds must meet at least one of the following criteria:

The rehabilitation of veterans honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces after April 6th, 1917. The welfare of the families of veterans of the above-named period. The rehabilitation of hospitalized military service personnel returning home and awaiting discharge who require treatment in service hospitals. The welfare of veterans, active military personnel, and the families of veterans

and active military personnel of the above-named period, where financial and medical need is evident. For the purpose of poppy kits and supplies used to make symbolic poppies and poppy items that will be distributed to -- for donations to the Poppy Fund.

Whereas the above listed criteria limit the use of Poppy funds to only active military personnel and their families, thus excluding National Guard and Reserve service members and their families. And whereas, the National Guard and Reserve service personnel and their families also face both financial and medical hardships. And whereas the majority of our membership live within closer proximity to National Guard and Reserve units than to active military installations.

Therefore, be it resolved that the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention delegates request that the American Legion expand eligibility criteria for the use of Poppy funds to include members of the National Guard and

Reserve, their families of the above-named period where financial and medical need is evident.

And be it resolved that the criteria for approved use of Poppy funds read as follows:

"The rehabilitation of veterans honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces after April 6th, 1917. The welfare of families of veterans of the above-named period. The rehabilitation of hospitalized military service personnel returning home and awaiting discharge who require treatment in service hospitals. The welfare of veterans, military personnel, and the families of veterans and all military personnel of the above-named period where financial and medical need is evident. For the purpose of poppy kits and supplies used to make symbolic poppies and poppy items that will be distributed to donations to the Poppy fund."

The pre-convention Poppy Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. Madam President, on behalf of the Resolutions Committee, I move the adoption of the resolution

as read. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of the resolution as just read. The Poppy Pre-convention Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. Is there a discussion?

Hearing none, are you ready for the question? Those in favor -- microphone 2.

MS. DEXTER: Madam President, Mic --

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair --

MS. DEXTER: -- Mic 2?

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair -- the chair --

MS. DEXTER: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate, Microphone 2.

MS. DEXTER: DeDe Dexter, State of Arizona. I'm a retired 20 years veteran. I believe the Poppy money needs to stay at the veterans. They're the ones that are deployed. Their families, their spouses, they're the ones that travel. They have a lot of need more for

the Poppies. Post have emergency funds, I think for the Guard and the -- the Reserves need to come out of the -- the -- the post money, not Poppies. That is my recommendation. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

MS. MORRIS: Madam President, Mic 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at Microphone 3.

MS. MORRIS: Glynis Morris, Department of Nevada. Is it not true that National Guard has to have Title 10 orders from the President of the United States to be considered active duty? That changes this entire resolution --

PRESIDENT WARD: Pop --

MS. MORRIS: -- does it not?

PRESIDENT WARD: Poppy Chair Diana, could you please rejoin the podium? Maybe not. Stand. Hold, please.

(Pause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm sorry, Glynis. I don't have an answer to your question. So I -- I

would be happy to investigate it, but I don't have an answer right now. So if you could write it and get it to me at the head table, I'll get an answer to the question.

And can you table the resolution?

MS. KINNICK: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: We'll table -- I'm -- I'm going to get an answer to your question, and we'll table the resolution and handle it tomorrow.

MS. MORRIS: Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. MILLARD: Microphone number 1, Madam President.

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm getting used to where the microphones are. Thank you so much. The chair recognizes the delegate at Microphone 1.

MS. MILLARD: Thank you, Madam President. And to answer the question about the Title 10 status of a reservist in the National Guard. So Reserves are always Title 10.

National Guard, when they are called up to mobilize and deploy, they would be in that Title 10 status. Therefore, they should be eligible in the same way of Title 10 U.S. reservist and active-duty component.

So if the question is if they deployed and are injured and they're awaiting care at a military hospital, they should also then be entitled to the same privileges as both the active duty -- the active-duty component in the reserve component in that position. If she's saying --

(Applause)

MS. MILLARD: Oh, and someone told me to state my name. My name is Major Tracy Millard. I'm a United States Army attorney stationed --

(Applause)

MS. MILLARD: -- with the -- with the Department of New York. So --

(Applause)

MS. MILLARD: So we get that question

all the time, Madam President. And it's very important that people do understand the role with the National Guard when they're in their Title 10 capacity, not to be confused with their Title 5 and Title 32 for their state capacity.

PRESIDENT WARD: Right.

MS. MILLARD: But for that purpose in the hospital, they should enjoy the same rights and privileges of the active component and the reserve component.

(Applause)

MS. MILLARD: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you so much.

Boy --

MS. MILLARD: Thank you, ma'am.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you to the Department of New York. And boy --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: -- is it helpful to have some dual members who are lawyers in the audience or what, right?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: To the delegate from Nevada, does that answer your question?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at Microphone 3.

MS. MANN: I'm 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Oh, 3. I'm sorry.

MS. MANN: Sorry, ma'am. I'm Debra Mann from the great State of Florida. I wanted to just say I have thirty-one and a half years' experience in the United States Army, and half of that was -- or a good portion of it was in National Guard. I went to Iraq, Afghanistan, and I also been in Kuwait as a National Guardsman.

(Applause)

MS. MANN: Thank you. Every time I deployed, I was on Title 10. I would have done 60 -- I would have been in the military until I was -- until I died if I didn't get blown up by an IED. When I came back overseas -- from overseas and before I had that happen to me, my daughter, who was 19 years old at the time, was

full guardian of my 17-year-old son because I was a single parent.

So when it comes to hardship, my daughter grew up mighty fast, went ahead and moved from Tallahassee, Florida back to Sneads to raise my son. And they had financial, emotional, and every single hardship. So National Guard, when they go out of state, they have the same experiences as any active-duty person, and they should be recognized just as easily because our families suffer.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I would like to thank the delegate for those comments and also for your service to our country.

MS. FICKLIN: Madam President -- I heard that.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Arizona at Microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Thank you, Madam President. Rose Ficklin, Arizona. The way I am understanding the resolution is, they want to

cover it when they're not deployed along with when they're deployed. Most National Guard and Reserve, you hear it all the time, one weekend a month, two weeks a year. They have other jobs when they're not deployed. So at that point in time, if they're not deployed and they're under state orders, the mon -- you can help them with your general fund money, not Poppy money. And then when they get deployed and activated federally, help the family with the Poppy funds. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there any further discussion? The pre-convention Poppy Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. The question is on the adoption of the Poppy Resolution.

Those in favor of the resolution please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: Those opposed, please signify by saying no.

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: It requires a majority vote to pass, and the chair recognizes the ayes have it. The affirmative --

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: -- and the resolution has been adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Diana, please continue.

MS. SIROVINA: Madam President, this concludes the Poppy report.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Diana. Hey, we followed the script up here, right? We got this. Now we're going to take a five-minute break to go get those awesome keypads that have been reprogrammed. So please take your envelope and go to the back and get the keypads. We're

going to get those fired up.

(Music played)

(Pause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Start to reassemble
and get to your seats and we'll continue on.

(Pause)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. Calling back to
order. Ready? Begin.

Now we shine a spotlight on the
invaluable work of our Children & Youth
Committee. Their mission is clear: to
collaborate as a Legion family to safeguard,
nurture, and uplift children and youth,
especially those from military and veteran
families. Please join me in welcoming to the
stage our National Children & Youth Chair, Dr.
Lisa Chaplin.

(Music played)

(Applause)

DR. CHAPLIN: Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

DR. CHAPLIN: Madam President.

The Children & Youth Committee has embraced its mission to support our nation's children and youth in a variety of ways this year. Many of our activities were in keeping with our longtime traditions, such as trunk or treat events, breakfast with Santa, holiday parties, toy drives and distributions, Easter egg hunts, and providing coats, mittens, scarves, and hats. But we also prioritized a few focused areas.

The first was related to Good Deed and Youth Hero Awards. With our goal of recognizing at least one deserving youth with a Good Deed Award in each department this year and with Youth Hero Awards whenever possible. Good Deed Awards were given to those youths who demonstrated leadership in planning and implementing an activity that benefited individuals in their communities.

For example, in South Dakota. Wag --

(Cheering)

DR. CHAPLIN: Yeah -- Wagner Unit 1 recognized seven-year-old Ellie who organized a food drive to benefit a local food bank. Idaho's Unit 56 presented a Good Deed Award to Eustacious, who collected 184 pounds of pop tops. So that comes out to about 257,600 and some more in total to support Ronald McDonald House Charities in Idaho.

Youth Hero Awards were given for acts of extraordinary bravery and action in emergency situations. Virginia Beach Unit 110 recognized Vada, who saved her father's life by performing CPR, which she had learned only one week earlier while in Girl Scouts. South Dakota Sturgis Unit 33 recognized three high school girls who saved a man from drowning. And these are just a few of the numerous examples of exceptional young people who were awarded these -- these awards this year.

Another focus area of ours was bringing attention and recognition to military children. Units held Kids of Deployed Are Heroes 2 events and presented the kids with certificates,

buttons, and KDH2 stickers. Units were urged to purple up for Military Kids Day on April 15th, and many units across the country reported purpling up to show support and spread awareness of some of the challenges military kids often face.

Both Virginia and Maryland received proclamations from their respective governors proclaiming April is the month of the military child. Units throughout the country received proclamations --

(Applause)

DR. CHAPLIN: A little late. Yeah.

Units --

(Laughter)

DR. CHAPLIN: -- throughout the country received proclamations from their local governments proclaiming April is the month of the military child. And one of those was Point Pleasant 32 -- nope -- 23 in West Virginia.

As we challenged ourselves to dig deep to support the Child Well-Being Foundation, we

had 43 of our 52 departments contribute this year. The ALA's contributions totaled over \$74,000.

(Applause)

DR. CHAPLIN: We were also pleased with the success of Project Stuff Sack, which was a pilot program that involved 10 departments, each of whom filled 50 string backpacks that were branded with American Legion Auxiliary branding. And items to fill those sacks were determined by the participating departments according to their target recipient group. For those specifically destined to be distributed to military kids, one unit member painted 50 keychains with the dandelion, the official flower of the military child.

We distributed information through our monthly newsletters about upcoming events, such as quarterly meetings and any opportunity to celebrate and engage with children and youth in our communities. We use the ALA Children and Youth Facebook group page to engage with members

and share ideas and to share resources, as well as any of our successes with any of our endeavors.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this capacity. Madam President, this ends my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Next we will hear from Past National President Linda Newsome, who is going to give us an update on the work of the Child Well-Being Foundation.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Good morning

ALL: Good morning.

MS. NEWSOME: Madam National President, the whole child is, as the name implies, the focus on the child, and it certainly describes our work with The American Legion's Child Well-Being Foundation. Note that the name was changed from the Child Welfare Foundation to the Child Well-Being Foundation.

The American Legion Auxiliary is proud of its participation in, and support of, the philanthropic priorities in educating the public about the needs across the nation of the children, the Child Well-Being Foundation. Established in 1954, the Child Well-Being Foundation has awarded more than -- drum roll -- 20 million, with an M, in grants to assist --

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: -- to assist America's children. During the 2025 calendar year, 210 grant applications were received. Following a review by the Screening Committee, the Board approved granting 13 grants to nonprofit organizations for \$852,593 for the calendar year 2025.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Good going. Among the recipients is the American Kidney Fund of Rockville, Maryland, awarded \$25,000 for their project, American Kidney Fund Virtual Camp, national camp for pediatric kid -- kidney

patients. The Auxiliary and the SAL both voted for this grant.

Camp Corral of Raleigh, North Carolina was awarded \$20 --

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Boy, that slow reaction time.

(Laughter)

MS. NEWSOME: -- was awarded \$25,000 for its project Camp Corral Summer for Children of Military Heroes 2025. This project will allow the children of wounded, ill, and fallen military heroes to attend camp, where they can connect with their peers, foster new connections, and learn new skills.

The ALA and the Sons both supported this grant. Cleveland County ALWS --

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: -- Baseball Inc. of Shelby, North Carolina, was awarded \$125,000 for its project, 2025 American Legion World Series. This grant will help provide -- I should put that

past tense -- did help provide youth-centric activities during the week-long event. The ALA certainly supported this grant.

And Madam President, I understand that the games were epic.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Other organizations, such as Father Flanagan's Boys' Home of Boys Town, Nebraska, which was awarded \$25,000 for its national hotline.

LifeCampUSA of Wisconsin was awarded a \$25,000 grant to cover the cost of camp for children who have lost a parent in the line of duty, military, police, fire, and first responders.

And Gift of Adoption of Illinois was awarded \$21,000 for its project, Adoption Assistance for US-Born Children.

And more. Madam president, while this concludes my platform remarks, with your permission, I would like to present two distinguished guests who have joined us this

morning.

Stacy Cope serves as the Youth Welfare Program Manager in the American Legion's Americanism Division, where her responsibilities include oversight of the CWF program. And she is always my go-to person.

And I am delighted to present Past National Commander 2014-15, Michael Helm, from Post 313 in Lebanon, Nebraska, to present some very, very special awards.

Madam President, your guests.

(Applause)

(Music)

MR. HELM: I want to start off and recognize somebody out there somewhere. Where's Janet at? My president, Janet Jefford. She was a great president of -- and a great -- has become a great friend of mine.

Madam President, I'm amazed -- actually amazed, and I'm excited of the direction that the Auxiliary is taking. Your leadership and training programs are outstanding and are leading

the family in a whole great direction. And the presidents right before you have really, really turned your organization around and made our family a better family. So thank you very much.

Thank you for that warm welcome. And what other welcome could you have except warm when you're in Tampa, Florida?

Madam President, Past National Presidents, distinguished guests, and delegates, thank you for your continued support of The American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation. This year, CWF was able to raise over \$519,229 for the 2024-2025 program year, with \$74,101 of that coming from the American Legion Auxiliary. And thank you very much.

Thanks to your generous donation, CWF has been able to make a meaningful difference in the lives of countless children across the country.

Each year, the Auxiliary supports CWF grants to various organizations, including the American Kidney Fund, Camp Corral, Spectrum

Sailing, and the National Children's Cancer Society, among others. This ensures that every aspect of child well-being is addressed.

At this time, CWF would like to recognize those departments that have gone above and beyond for the 2024-2025 donation year.

The Excellence Award is awarded to the department with the highest per capita contribution average for the contribution year. The winner is the Department of Kentucky.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MR. HELM: The Meritorious Achievement Award is awarded to the top department experiencing the highest increase in per capita giving in a contribution year. And that winner is the Department of Washington.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MR. HELM: The U.S. "Udie" Grant Legacy Award is awarded to the top department nationally, based on combined total contributions

of the Legion Auxiliary, SAL, Legion Riders, and the 8 & 40, during a contribution year.

I got to step aside just a little bit because Udie Grant was a NEC man from Kansas for lots and lots of years. And as -- and as you all know, even though my department is Nebraska, I actually live -- I actually live in Kansas. And when I was a NEC man, Udie always called me the junior NEC man from Kansas. So he didn't -- he didn't let much get by him. What a great -- what a great man he was, and what a great supporter of CWF.

The winner of this award, the Udie Grant Award, is the Department of Pennsylvania.

(Applause)

MR. HELM: The Garland D. Murphy Jr. Award is awarded to the most active department in the nation, based on actual contributions received during a contribution year. And that winner is the Department of Florida.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MR. HELM: And Madam President, on behalf of The American Legion Child Well-Being Foundation Board of Directors, I would like to present you with the 2024-2025 five-diamond lapel pin as a way of saying thank-you for everything you have done for CWF over the years.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you so much. I got to look at it. Wow. Thank you, Mike. Appreciate you. Thank you.

MR. HELM: And we look forward to -- of you accomplishing great things in the next year. With the Auxiliary's help, I know that we can do it. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Michael, for that presentation. And special thanks to Lisa and Linda for their reports.

It is through our dedication to The American Legion Family that we continue to lead the way. Today, I am honored to introduce some of our most esteemed Legion family members. Please give a warm welcome to the President of the 2025 Convention Corporation, Clarence Bacon.

(Music played)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: All right. I already told you; I follow the script. We're going to do that -- we're going to do that again.

It is through our dedication to The American Legion Family that we continue to lead the way. I am honored to introduce some of the most esteemed Legion Family members. Please give a warm welcome to the president of the 2025 Convention Corporation, Clarence Hill, Past National Commander.

MR. CLARENCE HILL: Good morning. I have to admit that Clarence Bacon was a really good friend of mine, Past National Commander. But he was from Maryland, not -- not Florida. And for years before he died, he and I and Clarence Jacovy (phonetic), the NEC from Alabama, always sat in the front row. So there were three Clarences in the front row of every meeting.

So on behalf of the Tampa Convention Corporation, it is my sincere honor and pleasure to

welcome you to your 104th National Convention here in the heart of beautiful Tampa, Florida. We have been eagerly awaiting your arrival, and I can assure you; our city is ready to give you a warm Florida welcome and a convention experience to remember. Remember, it's sunny Florida. Might be a little liquid sun right now, but it's sunny Florida.

Tampa is a city with a deep respect for our military and veteran community. From our proud connection to MacDill Air Force Base, to our many local Legion posts, this is a community that embraces patriotism, service, and the values the American Legion family stands for. It is a city built on tradition, driven by innovation, and blessed with sunshine, hospitality, and heart.

As president of the Convention Corporation, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the incredible teams who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this convention possible. Our planning committee, our

chairmen, and their hard-working volunteers, our partners at Visit Tampa Bay, our hotel and hospitality professionals, the guidance of the professionals on the national staff, and most importantly, you, the members of the American Legion family. You are what gives this convention life and purpose.

This is more than an event. This is a gathering of heroes and their families, a celebration of service, and a moment to renew the mission that binds us all.

As you have -- begin your work here, I invite you to take full advantage of all that Tampa has to offer. Visit the Riverwalk, stroll through Ybor City, enjoy Cuban cuisine or the fresh seafood, or catch some of our famous sunsets over the bay. But beyond the sights and sounds, I hope what you take with you is a sense of appreciation, support, and pride this city and this state has for you.

We are honored to have you here. We are grateful for your service, and we are proud

to be a part of your continuing legacy of leadership, advocacy, and commitment to veterans and communities nationwide.

Welcome to Tampa. Welcome to your 104th National Convention. And thank you for your continuing -- for continuing to inspire this nation with your service; past, present, and future. God bless you. God bless the American Legion family, and God bless this nation. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: So let's give past National Commander Hill another round of applause for bringing us to beautiful, sunny Tampa Bay.

All this talk about "bacon" is getting me thinking about lunch. But first, we have some business we need to continue here.

Our next committee has shown dedication and commitment to our veterans' well-being and rehabilitation. Here to share with us the strides we have made in the path forward in our mission to serve those who have served us is

Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation National
Chair, Dr. Coral May Grout. Let's give her a
warm welcome.

(Music played)

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: Good morning.

And good morning to you, Madam National
President.

A huge thank you to all 52 department
chairs for their leadership with the VA&R program
this year. We had 100 percent department
reporting as of May 15th, the deadline.

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: And the reports were
amazing. A major highlight of the program
centered around celebrating 25 years of the ALA
involvement at the national level with the
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: How fitting that it was
held in Indianapolis.

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: What a fantastic week was had by your VA&R Committee and other volunteers, over 100 participants and their caregivers.

We visited the Indianapolis 500 Motor Speedway, and our national headquarters. Enjoyed Newfields, home of the Indianapolis Museum of Art, where the winners of the woodworking, jewelry, art, metalworking, and other categories were displayed. The creative writing winners held their displays at the entrance to the Butler University Theater, where the musical performance was held. The performance was equal to any on Broadway.

The Department of Indiana, under the leadership of Past National President Vickie Koutz, maintained --

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: -- an outstanding hospitality room and the ALA was recognized for its involvement for 25 years.

(Applause)

DR. GROUT: President Trish was on hand

for the entire week, presenting awards, participating in events, and accepting the 25th anniversary plaque on your behalf. Winners came from 41 departments, representing 116 United States Department of Veterans Affairs facilities.

Local creative arts events were held across the country, some supported by American Legion Auxiliary Foundation grants. The local winners were then judged at the national level.

We've been serving veterans since 1919. All 52 departments supported veterans in multiple ways through events, food baskets, holiday gifts, transportation to appointments, and cards to veterans and facilities in their homes, homeless, and incarcerated.

Mississippi Unit 50 members created more than 5,000 creative Christmas cards for their VA medical centers. One unit, California 302, went above and beyond for veterans. Members worked together to bring deported, honorably discharged veterans home. Over nine months, 379 veterans have been returned.

You supported Wreaths Across America. Through snow and sunshine, the Department of Connecticut initiated a project of the month. For 12 months, units were encouraged to work on their project of the month. Wreaths Across America was one month, outreach to VA medical centers was another month, and so forth. What a great way to address many of our VA in our areas.

You assisted with honor flights and stand downs as American Legion family members. You provided baby showers for women veterans. You supported Fisher Houses in multiple ways, and you ran with Be the One. In fact, Wisconsin Unit 65 created business cards to hand out to veterans. Each card read, "Do you know a veteran who needs assistance?"

Thank you for all you do for veterans across our land.

Madam National President, this concludes my platform remarks, and thank you for this magnificent opportunity to serve our veterans.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Coral. We do so much, and it's lovely to hear all that you have accomplished on behalf of our great mission.

The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival promotes the health and healing of our veterans. While the dedicated VA staff and ALA volunteers make this event a success, the event would not be possible without generous donations. Every donation secures a memory that the attendees will treasure for the rest of their lives.

Congratulations to all of our top donors. Let's give them a hand.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: From our grassroots members to our national leaders, we operate as one united family, dedicated to advancing the Americanism program. Please welcome National Americanism Committee Chair Christine Trahan, to share her report.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. TRAHAN: Madam President, as stated in our preamble to the Constitution of the American Legion Auxiliary, to foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism.

The Americanism Committee focus was working closely with our youth to promote Americanism in their schools, promoting Star Spangled Kids, the American Essay Contest, flag etiquette, and much more. Members were involved with educating our youth on the history of the United States, such as patriotism, Americanism, and the U.S. Constitution.

Our youth are the ones to pass the torch of patriotism to the next generation. They will shape the future.

President Ronald Reagan stated, "When we honor our flag, we honor what we stand for as a nation; freedom, equality, justice and hope."

Members promote Americanisms in our schools, libraries, and communities. Events such as flag raising ceremonies, parades on national holidays, and civic education workshops, were

organized in towns and cities nationwide.

Members distributed flags, marching color guards in parades, and decorated veterans' graves with flags. This is to show our nation they are never forgotten.

Getting involved in the schools and community demonstrates who we are, why we matter, and our commitment to patriotism.

Michigan Unit 3's main Americanism event is America and Me, a day camp program open to all students ages 5 to 12. At this one-day event, students learn how to fold a flag, flag etiquette, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the National Anthem, and other various projects. Units partnered with schools from kindergarten through high school, educating our youth about the principles of Americanism, teaching our youth flag etiquette, how to fold a flag, and why there are thirteen folds.

Minnesota Unit 202 and Unit 311 help kindergarten classes memorize the Pledge of Allegiance and let it at a Veterans Day program.

National Presidents (sic), Trish, American Essay Contest topic was, "What does America the Beautiful mean to me regarding our veterans and military?" This essay topic was picked to see what our youth think about our country, America, through their eyes. Do they see the freedoms we exercise every day because of our freedoms -- because of our veterans and military? Do they see the dedication of our veterans and military by protecting our liberties, ensuring that we remain in the land of the free?

The Department of Pennsylvania reported receiving over 1,500 Americanism Essay Contest entries. Wow. That is awesome sauce.

"What does America the Beautiful mean to me?" This prompt can be interpreted differently depending on how the person who writes the story. Through -- though, for me, this means the land we walk on. This means the sacrifice the veterans and military have made to ensure our safety. This means freedom. America

is a beautiful country thanks to the veterans and the military.

Minnesota and Montana units presented certificates to the American Essay Contest winners. Star Spangled Kids continues to be a success. ALA departments distributed over 2,000 kits. The Department of Texas distributed 850 kits to the school. What a great way to teach our youth about Americanism.

Members of the American Legion Auxiliary encourage citizens and their communities to get out and vote. It's our right and our voice to be heard.

Auxiliary members taught flag etiquette in schools and communities and collaborated with the American Legion, helping with the Oratorical Contest, Junior Sports Shooting programs, and American Legion Baseball.

Members continue to support the flag amendment, and we should until it passes.

Let us continue to inspire others to remember the greatness of our country and the

freedoms we enjoy. Think about the hundreds and thousands of men and women who have made the supreme sacrifice to protect our democracy and way of life. Remember the spirit of Americanism.

Madam President, on behalf of the Americanism Committee; myself, Julia, Vickie, Bonnie (phonetic), Bonita (phonetic), Dorothy (phonetic), and Mary (phonetic), thank you for this appointment. This concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Christine and well done on the Americanism program.

I know we're running long, team, so just hang in there. We're making some adjustments, so your patience is appreciated.

Our education program is dedicated to advocating for quality education for all, with a special focus on our military children. Please join me in welcoming to the stage our National Education Committee chair, Suzanne Knapp.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. KNAPP: Madam President, thank you for the opportunity to serve on your team as Education Chair this year.

The American Legion Auxiliary boasts a vast network of members, units, and departments, dedicated to advancing its mission of supporting the American Legion, veterans, our military, and their families, through advocacy, education, and community service.

I can report that out of the dozens of reports I received; the American Legion Auxiliary is working on that mission.

The National American Legion Auxiliary scholarships had 1,071 applications, nine of which had military addresses, and were stationed overseas. These scholarships added up to a total of \$153,000.

(Applause)

MS. KNAPP: Congratulations. We are making a difference.

Departments and units across the

country also awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships this year. Again, we are making a difference.

I wish I could talk about all the great work being done in the departments, but time allows - does not allow me to do so. Let me highlight a couple of unique programs.

From the Department of Florida, how can the Auxiliary engage the community schools and veterans? Through scholarships. Florida's Norma Kerkow Female Veterans Scholarship is awarded up to \$2,000 and is renewable for female veterans.

Florida has its Memorial scholarships, which it awarded to three recipients this past year. Florida also awarded 85 scholarships, valued at \$54,423, at the local level. Great job, Florida, for engaging the community and veterans to pursue higher education.

From the Department of Wisconsin, did you know that the Department of Wisconsin provides interest-free loans to female auxiliary members who are pursuing higher education? The

M. Louise Wilson Educational Loan Fund was established 100 years ago. What a benefit to those members wanting to improve their education.

Department of Wisconsin units reported that over \$102,000 was awarded to 202 students, as well as stocking the schools with supplies, supporting teachers and staff. Units are making an impact in their communities.

Now, I would like to highlight a unit report from Midland, Texas, Woods W. Lynch American Legion Auxiliary Unit 19. They're very active in their community for education. The unit awarded \$8,500 for 11 scholarships to local students. Five of the unit students were also awarded \$4,000 in scholarships from the department's scholarship programs.

The unit supports Give 10 to Education by going all out. They have cases of items that they donate, including backpacks, as well as the usual needed school supplies.

These are only a couple of examples of doing the American Legion Auxiliary's mission.

What is the story of your unit and department? There is a story to tell. Tell it. If your unit or department cannot raise the funds for unique programs, then tell the stories that already exist about our programs. Tell the ALA Girls State stories, the scholarship stories, and the stories of our veterans. It all matters, and it's all important, but only you can tell it.

In closing, don't forget to follow up with those you help. Find out how your story changed -- how their story changed because of you. These stories become the stories to tell the next generations.

Thank you for being selfless servants to our veterans, military, their families, and their communities.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Suzanne.

I have an important announcement. With 15 proposed amendments on the agenda, tomorrow will be epic. Yeah, that's the word. To tell us

how we will handle this epic business is National
Constitution & Bylaws Chair Norma Tramm.

Norma.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Thank you so very much,
Madam President.

So Saturday's Constitution & Bylaws
pre-convention meeting provided great insight,
and we appreciated so many of you being there.
Delegates asked some questions that helped us to
determine how to best present our 15 proposed
amendments that will be considered tomorrow.

So here's the plan. We're going to
bundle. So some of you may not know what that
means, so I'm going to explain it.

Of the 15 proposed amendments, the
Constitution and Bylaws Pre-con Committee found
that 11 of those proposed amendments to be
noncontroversial. Noncontroversial in this
situation means that these proposals fall into a
category of clean-up amendments. An example of a

clean-up amendment is like removing duplicate wording.

The bundle means that we will present these 11 noncontroversial proposed amendments as one motion. There will be no discussion on these proposed amendments in the bundle. One vote will be taken to adopt the entire bundle.

So if this sounds a little familiar to some of you, it should. It's exactly like handling a consent agenda. And just like a consent agenda, if there is something in the bundle that you would like to discuss, you have the opportunity to remove any of the proposed amendments from the bundle, and it will be handled separately.

A bundle is -- like a consent agenda, is utilized for efficiency. It allows the time that we have to be devoted to the proposals that warrant your discussion.

Step 2. After we're done considering the bundle, we will handle the remaining proposals separately, which means they will be

open for discussion and amendments.

So that's going to be the plan for Tuesday.

Now, I want to just mention that on Saturday, those of you who were here know that I said when we talked about headquarters with an S or not the S, I said, "Google it." And you did. And you kindly sent me the answer. So the answer is, there's supposed to be an S; "headquarters." And that's just housekeeping. So that's just done. We don't need to make anything else of that.

So let me read off the 11 proposed amendments, so that you'll know what's going to be in that bundle. And it's right there on the screen, so you can take a picture of this slide.

So the proposed amendments we're going to bundle are number 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 15. So make sure you snap a photo of that, so that you can come prepared tomorrow to know which ones we are going to bundle and which ones we are going to be discussing.

Thank you, Madam President, for this opportunity.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Norma. Everybody understands what's going to happen? Going to bundle, you can remove from the bundle and discuss separately. Good plan? Good plan.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. Now we're going to test the keypads. Now, we've discovered that it's taking a little longer for the signals to get to the signal handling device. So we're going to play two songs, OK? So here's your question. Press number 1 if you are having an epic and amazing time here in Tampa. Press number 2 if you're not. So please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. With a wing and a prayer, please show the results when ready.

OK. Yes. I love that theme song from Dallas, too, but we're going to cut it short here. We're going to let the -- the voting fobs

continue to talk to the voting fob box thing, and we're going to let it continue. We're trying to figure out exactly what's going on and how long it will take. So we're going to -- we're going to continue. So keep voting.

And if you have a blinking red button on your voting fob, that means it is not playing well with the other fobs. So we will replace that fob.

They're all blinking red? Fantastic.

We'll end today's session with our Public Spirit Award presentation, but before we bring out our special guest, let's have National Vice President Pam Ray share any announcements.

Vice President Pam, welcome to the podium.

(Applause)

VICE PRESIDENT RAY: Well, good afternoon.

Just a couple of reminders. Please do not forget to visit the Wall of Heroes. It's conveniently located outside these doors, and

it's open before and after each session, so don't delay, donate today.

Your breakout sessions this afternoon will begin at 2:00 p.m. to provide you some time to get something to eat. If you did not register and you want to attend, please stop by the staff offices in rooms 111 through 113. There are still some empty spots.

Madam President, that concludes the updates.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Pam.

The Public Spirit Award is more than just a recognition; it is a tribute to people and organizations who go above and beyond in their efforts to honor and uplift those who have served our country. The National League of POW/MIA Families, incorporated on May 28th, 1970, was formed with a three-fold mission; one, to obtain the release of all prisoners of war; two, the fullest possible accounting for the missing; and three, repatriation of all recoverable remains of

those who died serving our nation during the Vietnam War.

It is without a doubt that if we did not have the League of America's POW/MIAs -- would have long been forgotten.

Here to accept the award on behalf of the National League of POW/MIA families is Chair Emeritus, acting CEO, and my friend, Ann Mills-Griffiths.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. MILLS-GRIFFITHS: Well. Oh my goodness, that's quite a poster down there. I had no idea.

PRESIDENT WARD: We can see ourselves.

MS. MILLS-GRIFFITHS: Well, first, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Trish Ward, your National President, my friend, and all who participated, I'm assuming, in selecting me to represent the league and accept this National Public Spirit Award.

Trish's letter came to me as a total

surprise -- in fact, shock, and very near the end of my 50-plus years of fighting for answers to end uncertainty for POW/MIA families, all services, civilian and military.

But before I say another word, I want you to recognize one who has suffered through all of this since he was a little tiny boy. If my son, Steve Mills, will stand right over here, he deserves thanks.

And also with me, I brought a very unusual guy. His name is Colonel Ed Seitz. It's a longer name, but -- Air Force fighter pilot, Vietnam War. And Ed Seitz and his -- I call it "long-suffering wife," Mary, who puts up with him, came with me at my invitation, because of the invaluable work that Ed is doing for individual families, and to help us improve -- or the U.S. Government improve the accounting process. So Col. Seitz and his wife Mary, right down here.

What is often mentioned in the military is to leave no man behind. And those now serving

likely don't know that this meaningful goal came from the efforts that began during the Vietnam War. In fact, the National League of POW/MIA Families began pursuing answers, as Trish mentioned, when we were formed in 1970, before the end of that war, and some of us had already suffered years of uncertainty.

You need to understand how very grateful the League and all the original Vietnam War POW/MIA families are and were for the Legion and the auxiliaries' strong support during early, very challenging years.

And that was really the Sons and Daughters - I listened to the national commander of the Sons and Daughters, even though I couldn't understand it clearly in the back, there. But to think that they could have a national commander that is an adult age. I remember we all thought of them as those cute little kids that were around. Not anymore. And their invaluable contribution I also applaud.

But the Legion even provided space in

your DC National headquarters to house our office for many, many years. I worked very closely with the Legion staff in Washington, DC, and with, especially, their National Security Commission foreman -- it was called by several different names.

But for many years, I've devoted near-total attention to achieving, what she explained as, the fullest possible accounting for Americans captured and missing from the Vietnam War. That's now been expanded to include World War II, Korean War, and Cold War, those unaccounted for.

But in fact, the vast majority are known dead, and their families were notified, but they were never able to be individually identified.

That mission would never have occurred without the unified strength of the POW/MIA Families, the League, the VSO community, always led by, in those years, especially, the American Legion. But all the VSOs who appreciate the service our military now provides to support the

principles of our nation. And I loved seeing that support increase in recent times.

For young people, as I was when my brother disappeared in an F-4 Phantom over North Vietnam, the prospect of serving in a far-off war can be hard to understand. The reality hits home when the war ends and your loved one doesn't come back. Then, you truly gain an understanding of what forever really means and what sacrifice really is.

I've learned a great deal from decades of interaction with people of diverse cultures, from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, to France, Germany, and Russia. But working together and with all of them, and added support of other VSOs, we can and will accomplish the reasonable goals that were established so long ago.

What I've learned more than anything is the importance of visible determination and commitment to principles, integrity, truth, and sharing an honorable purpose, achieving a common goal.

Your decision to present me with this prestigious award for the National League of POW/MIA Families reinforces my determination to bring answers to end the uncertainty of families whose sons answered our nation's call to serve and still haven't returned at the end of the war.

Yes, due to the many years I've sought accountability for our POW/MIAs, it more than qualifies me. In fact, sometimes to the concern and fear of people in government. Because when you have too much experience and you learn too much, it can be a threat. And sometimes that happens. And the Legion has helped stand with me and with the National League of Families during some very difficult times.

But the reason why our mission is the fullest possible accounting is because those are the words that we developed, clear back in 1970. And it's because it's impossible for everybody to be returned in the kinds of wars we had in past years.

Thankfully, war is changing, as we sit

here. It's evolving, moving forward, and thankfully, we'll never have the volume of ground losses and combat losses, hopefully, that we've had in the past.

I know you all agree, and the rest of the world has to understand, America doesn't give up, won't cut and run and leave our men behind. That we seriously honor our veterans, and are deeply grateful for their service and sacrifice.

(Applause)

MS. MILLS-GRIFFITHS: If I can just close by saying good afternoon, not good morning, and I want to wish you all a great lunch. But God be with you as you move forward and accept new and evolving challenges and continue to establish the principles for which you're known.

My sincere thanks for honoring the League and me with this notable award, and for all that the American Legion and Auxiliary have done and continue to do for our nation. So thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Ann. It is

my incredible honor to present to you, on behalf of the American Legion Auxiliary, the 2025 Public Spirit Award.

And I want you all to know one thing that she did not mention. She's a member of the American Legion Auxiliary in the Department of Virginia.

It's kind of heavy. Are you good?

MS. MILLS-GRIFFITHS: I was going to say, it takes him a long time, because I'm really hard to take a picture of.

PRESIDENT WARD: It's a beautiful award. It's also kind of heavy.

So I especially want to thank Ann. In tribute to her and the great work that she's done, I have an original James Mills POW/MIA bracelet that I will be wearing to the state's dinner to honor her brother, James, who was lost during the Vietnam conflict.

Thank you, everyone. I'll see you tomorrow for session 2 at 8:30 a.m.

We are adjourned.

(Music played)

(Whereupon, the 2025 104th American Legion
Auxiliary National Convention was adjourned).



2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION
AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY
104TH ALA NATIONAL CONVENTION

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025

2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

8:30 A.M. - 3:24 P.M.

Tampa Convention Center

Central Hall

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Music played)

AUTOMATED GREETING: Welcome to Day Two of the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention, and here to begin this session is your national president, Trish Ward.

(Music played)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Good morning, everyone. I hope you had a great evening last night. And we're going to kick off the business of today's session here in just a moment. But before we do, I've had so many amazing moments with all of you, and I want to thank you all. Your generosity, the gifts that I've been given throughout the year have been overwhelming. I will treasure them all, but I received a gift yesterday and I wanted to share it with you. A Patrick Mahomes signed football from my friend Laura in Connecticut, and yes, I slept with it last night.

We're going to be honoring our past

national presidents here in just a moment, and I'm very excited about that, but first, before we get there, I am going to tell a quick story.

New Hampshire, where are you? I was visiting the great State of New Hampshire and having a blast, and they were telling me all about the old man on the mountain. But he's not there anymore because at like 4:30 in the morning, he fell off, and all they heard was a bunch of rocks falling.

And so we're having an awesome time with my friends, Joyce and Linda, and we're driving around New Hampshire, and I said, let's go to Canada, and if you saw the opening video yesterday morning, I said, I want to go to Canada. They said, no, no, I'm not taking you to Canada. I said, it's right over there. Let's just go, and you know, I haven't been to Canada in a really long time. And so I just thought that, you know, when you get across the border from the U.S. to Canada, there's like an arm, right. No, no, there's no arms. So after

talking to them, they said, we will take you near Canada, but we won't take you in Canada. I said, all right. So I thought there would be an arm, right? There's no arm. But there was the sign, Welcome to Canada. You saw it on the big screen yesterday morning. So there we go, I said, there's the sign.

So we took pictures and we're having a blast, and here he comes. Can I see your passport? I said, well, I don't have my passport, but I have Global Entry. And he said, you're good. What about them? I said, I don't really know about them. I can't really say.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: So they pull out their driver's license and the Mouny guy is looking at it, you know, like this. And they're like, OK, you're good. And I remember specifically them asking, so we're good and we can go back in the U.S. And he says, I don't care what you do. So we take some more pictures and we're good. And we get back in the car and we turn around. Guess

what? Can I see your passport? I said, I don't have my passport, but I have Global Entry. He said, you're good. What about them? I said, I don't really know, and I didn't want to go into Canada in the first place.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: So once again, they look at their driver's license and we get in the car, and boy, I saw some really nervous New Hampshire members right there in the car. So we're driving. We get back in the car, and everyone in the car says, don't anyone call Kris West. Nope. Nobody call Kris. What do you suppose happens when we get back in the car? Everybody's on their phone calling Past National President Kris West. So I pray that she is watching. She is missed, and Kris West, if you see me, I see you. There's a part of you in my heart, and I think about you every day. And thank you for an amazing time in New Hampshire.

Welcome to Day Two of the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to

begin this session is me, your National President, Trish Ward.

The 104th National Convention of The American Legion Auxiliary will come to order. Please take a moment to ensure your electronic devices are in silent mode. Thank you. Someone will forget to do it. So please double check. Thank you.

Our national chaplain will lead us in our invocation.

MS. BATISTE: Let us pray. Dear God, we are blessed to see another day here in Tampa. Continue to watch and keep us as we carry out the work of the American Legion Auxiliary. We are grateful for our veterans and their families. May we stay attentive to them and those in our communities. Remind us to be kind, give grace, and be a blessing to others. Amen.

PRESIDENT WARD: Amen. Please be seated. OK. We are going to do a test vote of the voting fobs. Everybody have their voting fob? OK. So it is taking longer for the

signals to get to the voting fob counting device. So you want to continue to press the number. If it's red flashing, just wait and press the number again. When you see green, it's counted. So far so good. OK. We're going to do a voting test right here. If you think this national convention is epic, press 1. If you don't think it's epic, press 2. So I want to see 907 1s up there, but I'm just saying. Ready? Go.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hold it up if you're green. I'm feeling hopeful. Have you seen greens? Keep pressing. Well, the music stopped, and I'm thinking they're going to show the results. 693, they say yes, epic. 34, not so epic. So for those not so epic folks, I think the tattoo convention is going to be here in about a month. Maybe that one's more exciting.

You feeling good about the fobs?

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: 693 to 33. Hold, please. Votes are still coming in. Seven.

Sorry, my eyes are not so good. 716 to 33.

Votes are still coming in. Still pushing the button -- buttons.

OK. So we're going to proceed with the morning, and we're favorable here. We know at least three songs to count the votes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Madam President. Mic 1. Department of California guidance from pages. If you're not able to vote, press the channel button.

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm hearing, please do not do that. Hold, hold, please. Thank you for that comment. One moment please. If you got a red light twice, please go to the back. Red light twice, please go to the back.

OK, team. So we're going to let them go back, exchange the -- talk to them about the keypads, and we're going to continue with the morning session since we have so much business. And I know you don't want to miss this great moment.

So let's start the morning off with some amazing women. Please welcome Past National President Lisa Williamson, who will do the honors.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Good morning. I have the honor of introducing our Past National Presidents.

From the Department of Oregon, Linda Boone, your 1992-93 national president.

From the Department of Maryland, Linda Newsome, your 1994-95 national president, the Queen of Diamonds.

From the Department of Kentucky, Virginia Hobbs, your 1998-99 national president.

From the Department of Ohio, Desireé Stoy, your 2008-2009 national president.

From the Department of Kentucky -- sorry -- Connecticut, Janet Jefford. Sorry. I was transferring you, Janet. Your 2014-2015 national president. My apologies, Janet.

From the Department of Illinois,
Sharon Conatser, your 2015-2016 national
president.

From the Department of Washington,
Mary Davis, your 2016-2017 national president.

From the Department of Wisconsin, Diane
Duscheck, your 2017-2018 national president.

From the Department of Iowa, Nicole
Clapp, your 2019-2021 national president.

From the Department of Kentucky, Kathy
Daudistel, your '21-'22 national president.

And from the Department of Indiana,
Vickie Koutz your '22-'23 national president.

PRESIDENT WARD: And of
course, from the Department of Alaska, 2023-2024
National President Lisa Williamson.

These ladies represent over three
decades of American Legion Auxiliary Leadership
at the highest level. Please let them know how
much their service is appreciated.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: No task was too big or

too small for our members to support our armed forces and their families. Here to tell us more about how auxiliary members are volunteering to help military families is National Security Chair Michele DeGennaro.

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: Thank you, Madam President Trish. Members, we're leading the way in support of our national security program this year as departments and units supported active duty military and their families, partnered with other agencies to support quality of life and never forgot about our POWs and MIAs.

Through their fundraising efforts, Auxiliary Unit 85, in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, supported many events for Rhode Island military children through the Rhode Island National Guard's Child and Youth Program, providing activities for military children from all service branches.

New London Submarine Base USO, located in Groton, Connecticut, received 210 pocket

prayer quilts from Unit 104 Auxiliary members with the help of Easterseals, Veterans Rally Point, and their donation of materials, auxiliary members started quilting. The iron-on unit label and laminated verse completed the prayer quilts.

The Department of North Carolina partnered with Operation Homefront. Thank You, where they provided meals and distributed toys and stocking stuffers for 350 families at Fort Bragg.

Department of Wisconsin Auxiliary members were busy raising awareness for POW/MIAs, researching and sharing information on Wisconsin's Vietnam War MIAs. Auxiliary members retrieved the last known location of 25 MIAs, along with their photos, and provided this information in the likeness of dog tags. The dog tags were distributed to district chairs featured in the department's newsletter and posted on the Wisconsin Auxiliary website. State representatives took notice when over 400 veterans and auxiliary members marched on the

Capitol to present their agenda, which included funding for the University of Wisconsin Madison MIA Recovery and Identification Program.

"Troopons" were another strong effort in supporting our military families. Most departments reported millions of dollars in coupon value were clipped and sent overseas. Many units also reported that this program was a great project, keeping members involved who would not normally be able to volunteer. Coupons were a win-win for all.

Unit 40 in Fort Pierce, Florida, assembled and sent 30 troop boxes to an Army Reserve unit that had been deployed to Poland for a year. With a total of 140 volunteer hours, packing boxes, and over 2000 in-kind donations, the reservists were more than grateful for all they received.

Department of Delaware members were busy supporting the 166th Air Wing Maintenance Company's monthly breakfast break with the Delaware National Guard.

While Illinois Auxiliary units were busy presenting Military Excellence and Scholastic Excellence Awards to ROTC university programs. Eighteen cadets were honored from all six state universities.

Unit 104, in Pinellas Park, Florida, made a huge impact out of a small gesture. After Hurricane Helene, a rest and recovery camp was set up at the Armed Forces Center in Saint Petersburg for the National Guard that had been activated for hurricane rescue and recovery efforts.

When Hurricane Milton came quickly after Helene, many of the Guardsmen had no chance to go home to get clean supplies. A mobile laundry mat had been rolled in, but there were no cleaning supplies with it. The family service representative knew who to call, and Unit 104 jumped into action and was able to successfully solicit and receive hundreds of laundry detergent pods so that personnel could clean their clothes before heading back to help the many in need.

I want to thank you for all the department reports. With all 52 departments reporting and a record breaking 34 submissions in total, and all divisions represented for the Salute to Service Members Award.

Central Division, seven entries in total. Illinois, two entries; Iowa; Michigan; Ohio, two entries; and Wisconsin.

Eastern Division, eight entries in total. Delaware, two entries; Maine, two entries; Maryland, two entries; New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Northwestern Division, three entries. Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

Southern Division, ten entries in total. Alabama, three entries; Florida, five entries; Kentucky and Puerto Rico.

Western Division, six entries in total. Alaska, two entries; Arizona; Hawaii, two entries; New Mexico.

Woohoo! Auxiliary members volunteered long hours supporting our National Security

Program from donating to the USO, honoring Blue and Gold Star families, remembering POW/MIAs, serving meals, hosting holiday parties, baby showers, and many other events for our active duty military, National Guard, and their families. Attending welcome homes, sendoffs and yellow ribbon ceremonies, clipping coupons, sending care packages, community emergency response training, and donating gallons of blood, all while continuing the Be The One mission. Let us not forget all who participated in Red Shirt Fridays which have now become the norm as our members continue everyone deployed until they all come home.

Thank you, Madam President, the National Security Committee, and you, our members.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

Madam president, I said I can keep going. It is now my pleasure to introduce our Salute to Servicemembers Award recipients.

Past National President Lisa Williamson served as vice chair of the National Security Committee as well as the Salute to Servicemembers Chair. I would like to personally thank Lisa for all her hard work and dedication to this program. Thank you, Lisa.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: A huge amount of gratitude goes out to those members who took the time to enter 34 submissions to our Salute to Service Members Award. We had submissions from every branch of service with the exception of Space Force, so let's try to get that next year.

I am pleased to introduce to you the following individuals selected as the '24-'25 American Legion Auxiliary Salute to Service Members Award recipients. They are all fine examples of the dedication of our service personnel today, both within the military and within their communities.

First up, we have from the U.S. Army, Sgt. Jared Reber. Nominated by Urbana Unit 71,

in the Department of Illinois.

On September 11th, 2001, Jared Reber was allowed to return home from school once he heard of the attack on the World Trade Center. As it turns out, his mother was flying that morning for work and they prayed she was all right. Finally, she was able to call home and let him know she was safe. This is what started Jared on the path to the military. After a deployment, Sgt. Reber returned to American soil on September 11th, 2021, the 20th anniversary of 9/11, with other soldiers. They began talking about 9/11, and it was then that he realized the majority of his fellow soldiers were not even alive during the first attack during the attack on 9/11. He took it upon himself to educate these young soldiers about the importance of this date and the fear that was instilled in him and in America. Please help me welcome to the stage Sgt. Jared Reber.

(Music played)

SGT. REBER: So I am honestly not very

good at public speaking. My MOS did change that a little bit for me as I was the one that was given all the TARP briefs, and my first one consisted of over 300 people, and I was definitely freaking out on stage at that time. I would like to thank Urbana, Illinois, Unit 71 and the Department of Illinois for the prestigious award.

I do apologize. This is going to be a little hard. I deployed in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom Sentinel, and today has a significant effect because we lost 13 service members on this day. I had the honor of being beside many of my brothers and sisters, but those 13 gave the ultimate sacrifice. This week in general is tough on me and my family as August 23rd, my wife and I actually lost a son in 2017. Being away from my family during that week was hard enough, but duty called. I'm grateful for the support of my mother and my father, but mostly I want to thank my beautiful wife for being a military spouse because we know it's not

easy. Brianna, thank you for sticking by my side, my two kids who not fully understand but know it is work or others will say it is a way of life. Thank you.

(Music playing)

MS. DEGENNARO: It is with great pride that I introduce from the U.S. Air Force, Senior Master Sgt. Charles Robbins, Jr. He was nominated by Shore Boros Unit 351, in the Department of New Jersey.

(Music playing)

MS. DEGENNARO: Buddy Checks are a daily part of Senior Master Sgt. Robbins' everyday life. As members of the American Legion family --

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: As members of the American Legion family, we know the importance of buddy checks. Senior Master Sgt. Robbins is a native of Toms River, New Jersey, and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 2008. He played American Legion baseball from 2001 to 2004. He's a 2003

graduate of New Jersey Boys State. And while growing up, he helped out or participated in many American Legion functions at all levels. He's a current 18-year member of Shore Boros American Legion Post 351. Without further ado, please welcome Senior Master Sgt. Charles Robbins, Jr.

(Music played)

SENIOR MASTER SGT. ROBBINS: Good morning everyone.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SENIOR MASTER SGT. ROBBINS: National President Trish Ward, national officers, and auxiliary members from across this great country. When I learned I was being recognized with the Salute to Service Member Award, I was truly speechless. To be selected as the Air Force winner is an incredible honor, and I'm deeply humbled and grateful for this award. The American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary have always played an important role with my family as I grew up.

My father, Chuck, is an Army veteran

who continues to serve veterans today as the American Legion National Vice Commander. My mother, Nancy, has held various auxiliary positions throughout the county and at Post 351, such as serving in county and unit president positions. They both have instilled values that have enabled me to be where I'm at today, and I am forever grateful for everything they've done for me. Thanks Mom and Dad for being here today. Since joining the Air Force -- Sorry.

(Applause)

SENIOR MASTER SGT. ROBBINS: So I joined the Air Force. I've had the privilege of serving with great airmen all over the world. My current and past leadership have always given me the resource to lead and tackle any challenges that I was going through. My current supervisor, retired Master Sgt. Dave Deppen (phonetic), is here today and I'd like to thank him for being here to support me. Thanks, Dave.

Throughout my career, I've strived to embody the Air Force core values, which closely

align with the Auxiliary's mission statement -- service not self. It's a guiding principle for all of us here. Leadership, I've learned, isn't just about rank, it's about leading by example, empowering your team, and fostering a culture of respect and collaboration. Something that I've always striven for.

I've had many great experiences in my career, from times in Afghanistan, to my journeys through Europe and Australia. But one experience that has always stood out to me is volunteering with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. Working with this team, I sifted through soil at various crash sites throughout Germany, helping identify remains of American heroes from past wars. It was a humbling and deeply meaningful experience. It reinforced the importance of honoring our past and ensuring that no one is ever forgotten. I would like to thank the Department of New Jersey President Charlene Gladden. Members from the great County of Ocean, and of course, members of American Legion Post

351 Auxiliary. Thank you for always being there for my family and for nominating me for this award.

I can't forget to thank my wife, Julie, who unfortunately couldn't be here today. Thank you for sacrificing your time away from your family and your career to allow me to continue serving in the Air Force. And finally, to every auxiliary member here today, thank you for your unwavering and tireless support for our service members. It means the world to us, and we're proud knowing that you always have our back. Thank you.

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: From the U.S. Navy. Welcome, Senior Chief Patrick Dixon, nominated by Hawaii Unit 56. Senior Chief Patrick Dixon has provided guidance for the religious program specialists assigned to Chaplains Religious Enrichment Development Operation becoming the subject matter expert in his field. On top of the time and dedication given to his position, he

goes above and beyond in his free time as well. For example, he assisted a local business in building their Skillbridge program so that service members can have a smooth and educated transition out of the military.

I think part of the nomination from Hawaii sums it up best, and I quote, "he loves helping others and being a stand-up citizen. He is humble to the point of never even wanting acknowledgment for all the kind gestures he does which makes him all the more eligible for winning such an award." I ask you to welcome to the stage, Senior Chief Patrick Dixon.

(Music played)

SENIOR CHIEF DIXON: Yes. Go, Navy.

Aloha.

AUDIENCE: Aloha.

SENIOR CHIEF DIXON: OK. We good?

(Laughter)

And howdy. I'm Senior Chief Culinary Specialist Patrick S. Dixon. I'm here following the legacy of my 95-year-old grandfather who

answered the call of our great nation.

Currently, I'm serving as Department Leading Chief Petty Officer at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, where I was nominated for this honor, and served you today.

I'm a native of Lufkin, Texas. Yes, and I've had the pleasure of venturing in many different locations in 22 years of Naval service. I was first stationed in Thurmont, Maryland. Yes, there I was humbled to be a presidential chef for not only one, but two presidents and their families. Former President Bush and also former President Obama. I also led Naval Station Mayport Oasis Galley Food Service Team to win the covenant -- I'm sorry. To win a covenant (sic) Captain Edward F. Ney Award.

My career has me stationed in many different Naval warships like the USS Stephen W. Groves, FFG 29, who was homeported in Mayport, Florida, after Hurricane Katrina. Also USS Bonhomme Richard, LHD 6 in Sasebo, Japan, being

one of the Navy's forward deployed warships in Seventh Fleet, keep a naval presence and ready to respond to nation's call.

In 2021, I was selected to serve on the Navy's newest guided missile destroyer, USS Frank E. Petersen, DDG 121, built in Pascagoula, Mississippi, where I am one of the plank owners for the original crew that brought her to life. Which circles back to my personal home life, being raised by my grandfather, who was a marine, who served during the Korean War. It's been a pleasure serving my country. Training, guiding my reliefs, and leaving a legacy for others to follow, but my military -- but mainly helping keep this country safe for us, my kids, grandkids and generations to come. Thank you, ALA National President Trish Ward, Hawaii ALA Stephanie for the nomination from Unit 56. Thank you for the nomination. Thank you and mahalo.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: Next, I am honored to

present Chief Master Sgt. Ronald J. Polivka of the Air National Guard, nominated by Pleasant Dale Unit 354, in Nebraska.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: Chief Master Sergeant Polivka enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Air National Guard in June 1986 and has served for 39 years. His current assignment finds him as the Group Senior Enlisted Leader to the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base. He is the principal advisor for the group commander on all enlisted matters to include the health, welfare, morale, professional development, and effective utilization of all enlisted personnel assigned to the 170th Group. Chief Polivka has been a member of Pleasant Dale American Legion Post 354 in Pleasant Dale, Nebraska for 13 years. Please welcome to the stage Chief Master Sgt. Ronald J. Polivka.

(Music played)

CHIEF MASTER SGT. POLIVKA: Good morning, Tampa, and American Legion Auxiliary. I

want to give a shout out to Nebraska. Go, Big Red. So I am Chief Master Sgt. Ronald Polivka, and I am from Nebraska. I'm a National Guard -- a little. There we go. National Guard member. I decided to stay in Nebraska. I didn't want to move. Both sides of the family are Nebraska. So I chose to join the Nebraska Air National Guard.

Before I go into my little bit of my story, I want to first thank the Pleasant Dale Unit 354, as well as the Department of Nebraska American Legion Auxiliary for my nomination and the National American Legion Auxiliary for my selection. So I am honored and humbled to be standing up here representing the National Guard and Reserves.

So back to my story a little bit for Nebraska. I decided to stay. I go from -- both sides of the family, have a long history in the military, but they all wear the Army uniform. Every single one. So on my wife's side, a colonel in the army all the way to my dad's side, the brothers, uncles, everybody -- her cousins,

everybody. So I was the first to be blue. And he could imagine the side-eye looks I got and eyebrows and say, hey, we thought you were a pretty smart guy. What's going on? But 39-and-a-half years later, I'm here still serving. So --

(Applause)

CHIEF MASTER SGT. POLIVKA: So I am in Nebraska Air National Guard. I do represent the airmen. The 170th. I do work for them every single day. They don't work for me. I work for them. I'm there to serve them. In the State of Nebraska, since I'm an Air National Guard, I moved between both organizations. The 155th, Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, Nebraska, where I spent 29 plus years, and as well as Offutt Air Force Base at the 170th Group, and we have a 200-person group, and I've been there for about nine plus years with my current assignment.

And I tell you what gets me up every morning is to walk into those enlisted calls and see those young airmen out there, and the energy

they bring, and the willingness to serve, and it's just absolutely invigorates me every single day.

So I also had the opportunity to be on multiple TDYs and deployments in the Air National Guard. Too many countries to list, but after 9/11 those all extended. I got -- after September -- 9/11 happened, I got notification that I'm going on one-year orders, so location unknown at that point in time. So we ended up being part of the Airbridge for a year in Monron, Spain of all places. A great place to be, but by being in there, we got to see everyone coming in and everyone going out. And I work in the intelligence field, so I got to talk to every single branch in the military and work with every single branch.

And then in 2010, I spent six months in Afghanistan in a NATO mission. And same thing -- I got to work with every single branch of the military, as well as our NATO allies, and our regular allies was on top of NATO. Those two

deployments taught me one thing and that is with the chance to serve with all the branches, everyone wears a different uniform, and we do things a little differently, but, number one, we're there to protect the country, and, number two, we're there to serve. And it really hits home when you're down range and seeing that.

And so -- and one last -- two last thank-yous. The first one is we can't do what we do overseas and what we do on our job every single day if it isn't for our families and folks like you that take care of our families. So I want to thank my wife, Amy, as well as all the military families as well, for everything that you do for us when we're gone, able to do our job for the country.

I also want to thank the American Legion Auxiliary for everything you do for the servicemen also. Service before self, and I think you live that also. I want -- one quick shout out and thank you again for the American Legion Auxiliary for having me stand up here

today. And thank you for all you do.

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: Next, let's welcome from the U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Jonathan F. Morocho-Ludizaca. He was nominated by Hugh Gilbert Strickland, Unit 138 and my home Department of Florida.

As an adjunct clerk and an inbound customer service administrative clerk with a consolidated personnel administration center for the US Marine Corps Forces Central Command, located on MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Lance Corporal Morocho-Ludizaca has grown and excelled in his professional duties. In April, in support of the Month of the Military Child, he spent time volunteering for the Military Child Parade as well as supporting other activities at Westshore Elementary School in Tampa. He also assisted with a school supply drive at the Child Development Center on MacDill Air Force Base. Prior to Memorial Day weekend, he spent a few hours in making sure that a gravesite of one of

his fallen comrades was in pristine condition ahead of the holiday. Please help me welcome to the stage, Lance Cpl. Jonathan F. Morocho-Ludizaca.

(Applause)

(Music played)

LANCE CPL. MOROCHO-LUDIZACA: Good morning ladies. Good morning gentlemen. I stand before you today, deeply honored and proudly humbled to accept this award. This recognition means more to me than I can ever express, not only because it highlights individual achievement, but because it reflects the duty and courage that I have served alongside. To my unit, Marine Corps Forces Central Command, thank you for your trust, and your strength, and your support in the most difficult moments. You reminded me what duty, loyalty, and brotherhood truly means. To my family, thank you for your patience, your prayers, and your love from afar. Your sacrifices do not go unseen, and they are never unfelt.

This award is a symbol to me not only for the values that we carry forward, such as integrity, courage, and commitment to something greater than ourselves. I accept that not as a conclusion, but as a reminder to continue serving with honor. To those who wear the uniform, past and present, this is for you. Thank you.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. DEGENNARO: And last but not least, from the U.S. Coast Guard, I present Petty Ofc. First Class Casey Boyle. He was nominated by Sitka Unit 13 in the Department of Alaska. Petty Officer Boyle is an exemplary sentinel and an asset to the U.S. Coast Guard according to his superiors. Petty Ofc. Boyle's dedication continues beyond his military service. Much of his volunteer efforts contribute to his local American Legion post. His impacted programs such as National Emergency Fund, Operation Comfort Warriors, Child Well-Being Foundation, and Be the One.

Petty Ofc. Boyle heads up his local post's game night, where he leads youth in the fundamentals of Magic -- The Gathering, a collectible trading card strategic game where they learn to read, think, and communicate. It forces them to put down their devices and interact with one another. He has partnered up with Magic Kids to ensure our Legion family has the items needed to support this leadership building game. Please allow me to welcome to the stage Petty Ofc. First Class Casey Boyle.

(Applause)

(Music played)

PETTY OFC. BOYLE: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good Morning.

PETTY OFC. BOYLE: I'm Chief Petty Ofc. Casey Boyle. I'm a damage control man and have been in the Coast Guard for 14 years. Originally from Las Vegas, Nevada, the Coast Guard has moved. Yeah -- the Coast Guard has moved my wife and my kids to all parts of the country, from Kodiak, Alaska; to Coos Bay,

Oregon; to Newport, Rhode Island; to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; yeah -- and finally Sitka, Alaska.

In my time, I've participated in search and rescue in the Bering Sea, waterway security in the Arctic, aids to navigation in Long Island Sound, and waterways management in the Ohio River. Through this career, there has been an American Legion ready to support Post 17 in Kodiak, Alaska; Post 34 in Coos Bay, Oregon; Post 43 in Warwick, Rhode Island; Post 23 in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, where we frequented a lot when I was on the Ohio. A member of our post was actually shuttled to the local hospital. One of our injured crewmen, we pulled in, they shuttled him to the hospital, no questions asked and got him back to the ship without any hesitation, or Post 499 in Point Marion, Pennsylvania, when we got fogged into the bank, unable to navigate the waters, they hosted our entire crew in a last minute Veterans Day dinner. Finally, Post 13, Sitka, Alaska -- the post where I serve as a first vice; the post that

has allowed me to work closely with the auxiliary and fundraise thousands of dollars for domestic abuse shelters and animal shelters in our small little town; a post that has taught me and so many others what it truly means to give back.

I can't thank the American Legion family enough for this award opportunity. Please keep inspiring the next generation the way that you inspired me. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. DEGENNARO: I would invite all of our Salute to Service Member recipients back to the stage for a group photo. We're working on it. Hopefully they will be at our luncheon. So we'll do a group photo at the luncheon. How about that?

Well, we're not sure if they're bringing them back out or not, but please join me in one more round of applause for our award recipients, thanking them for their service to America and to their communities. They truly stand for service, not self. And that, Madam

President, concludes the platform remarks of the National Security Committee. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our servicemember recipients are going to join us back on the stage. So your kindness is appreciated as they make their way back.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Group photo at the luncheon.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Michele and team did a fantastic job, and it was so awesome to see those servicemembers here today. As I sat there and thought about all that we do, it just really brings everything full circle back to our mission and why we're here, And what really, really matters is our servicemembers. So let's give them all one big, huge round of applause.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our national Risk & Compliance Committee plays a critical role in

identifying, assessing and mitigating risks while ensuring adherence to legal and regulatory requirements. Please welcome the vice chair of our national Risk & Compliance Committee, Paulette Caron.

(Music played)

MS. CARON: Good morning, Officers, delegates, alternates and guests. I am Paulette Caron, a member of the 2024-2025 national Risk & Compliance Committee. Our chair, Past National President Kathy Dungan, sends her regrets and wishes us all a very successful convention.

The national Risk & Compliance Committee is charged with assuming an independent oversight and advisory role within our organization. We offer recommendations to the board while the National Executive Committee retains decision making authority. We also review policies on a regular basis. Safeguarding our organization requires having and following proper procedures for oversight, internal

controls, and a system of checks and balances.

We led the way for the entire American Legion Auxiliary organization by reviewing required Internal Revenue Service forms for both the national organization as well as the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. We worked closely with our external audit firm, Blue & Co. We are extremely proud to report that both IRS Form 990 received a clean audit opinion.

Our committee met on a regular basis to ensure our organization is safeguarded. When requested, oversight was provided throughout the organization as needed. All departments and units can assist in mitigating risks. We highly recommend you conduct a thorough financial audit on a yearly basis ensuring oversight of all monies and confirming all required tax obligations are met timely.

Take immediate and appropriate steps to address any noncompliance with any financial matter. It is imperative that all donations earmarked for a specific event or project are

used exclusively for that reason. We encourage you to hire a professional firm to conduct an IT risk assessment every three years. Cyber security is everyone's responsibility.

In addition, it is a good idea to regularly review all insurance policies to ensure adequate coverage is maintained. If you haven't already, we recommend a department risk and compliance committee that be established to oversee compliance and adherence to all department requirements. All members are charged with actively safeguarding the reputation of the American Legion Auxiliary and to eliminate the risk to our reputation, membership, and future monetary donations. We are all in this together.

We also recommend departments and units conduct background checks for volunteers working with vulnerable populations. To assist in ensuring you are continuously mitigating risks, we offer financial and cybersecurity resources. We encourage you to review the IRS's website for important information and updates, as well as

reviewing your local and state government websites to ensure you are following all requirements.

To ensure you are mitigating cybersecurity risks, we strongly recommend that you visit the National Institute of Standards and Technology's website to gain additional helpful data. We also recommend that you visit the American Legion Auxiliary national website for more guidance and information.

The entire committee worked together over the past year to ensure we are all safeguarding our members and our numerous assets. Thank you, Madam President. We were honored to help you lead the way. This concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT WARD: Working alongside the national treasurer, the national Finance Committee works to ensure the fiscal health and longevity of our organization. Please welcome the chair of our national Finance Committee, Janet Jefford.

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. JEFFORD: Madam President, the Finance Committee, which consists of all Past National Presidents: Nancy Brown-Park, Nicole Clapp, Sharon Conatser, and Kris West, has been working very hard this year.

Unfortunately, Kris resigned from the committee in May due to health reasons. Nancy Brown-Park was appointed to complete Kris' term, and Desiree Stoy was appointed to replace Nancy.

National staff began preparing the proposed FY 2025 budget last June. The committee met in July to prepare the final draft for presentation to the NEC at last year's convention. Staff and finance committee members dedicated numerous hours to reviewing monthly budget and investment reports. Zoom meetings were conducted to adjust our investment portfolio based on recommendations from our investment firm.

PRESIDENT WARD: An additional \$400,000

for AEF grants --

(Applause)

MS. JEFFORD: -- thank you --
sponsorship of a table for the inaugural ball,
and funds to support the American Legion's
Veterans Employment and Education Committee at
this convention.

An executive summary of our financial
performance Fiscal Year 2025 shows a total income
of \$5,625,600 for the first nine months, compared
to a budgeted amount of \$2,976,900.

(Applause)

MS. JEFFORD: Key highlights include:
membership income meeting targets, and investment
income exceeding budget by \$2,018,300, despite
market fluctuations.

(Applause)

MS. JEFFORD: We've had a pretty good
year in the markets. Overall, our expenditures
are \$6,990,300, under budget by \$621,300, and
compare well with last year's numbers.

(Applause)

MS. JEFFORD: The national Finance Committee is responsible for ensuring that all necessary financial policies are established and current.

This year, the committee began conducting an annual review of all financial policies. Many hours were spent on this task through Zoom meetings. As of the Pre-Convention NEC, all policies have been approved except one.

The national Finance Committee and national staff, together, have established a comprehensive process for budget preparation, approval, and implementation, and review as affirmed by our accounting firm's annual audit of the organization.

All departments should endeavor to clearly delineate these responsibilities and outline their budgeting procedures. It is advisable to begin this process with meetings involving upcoming leadership and office staff to discuss priorities for the forthcoming year.

Although "strategic planning" may not

always be a favored term, it is essential for departments to develop a plan detailing their objectives, for at least the next year, and the strategies to achieve their goals. Budgeted amounts for income and expenses should be set realistically.

Additionally, departments should have a contingency plan in case projected income does not meet actual expenses. Each department should establish a set of financial policies that are reviewed on a regular schedule. Clear and concise current policies assist the finance committee and your NEC in fulfilling their fiduciary responsibilities while preventing unnecessary conflict and discord.

Key questions to address include: Who approves contracts? Are all bids required to be presented in writing to the NEC? Who has the authority to sign those contracts? Who prepares checks? Who can sign them? How many signatures are required?

It is advisable to have two signatures

required for checks. The individual who prepares the checks should not have the authority to sign them without an additional signature. Reviewing national finance policies can provide valuable guidance on what should be implemented within your department.

At all levels, the Finance Committee holds a distinct role within our organization. While they contribute to all financial discussions, they do not possess any approval authority. As a committee under the executive committee, they do not act independently.

The Finance Committee is responsible for presenting the budget, monitoring the budget, and delivering financial reports at each board meeting. However, it is the executive board that approves the budget and any amendments to that budget throughout the year.

Furthermore, the Finance Committee drafts policies, but all those financial policies are also subject to the executive board's approval.

On the national level, the Finance Committee is permitted to adjust our investments. However, they are required to adhere to the investment policy which was approved and ratified by the NEC. Consequently, these actions also remain under the control of the board. This should be the case in all your departments.

You may ask, what is the role of the treasurer in this procedure? Mainly, it is one of oversight and making sure that all financial policies are followed by office staff and the Finance Committee.

Having a well-organized finance committee working in conjunction with officers and staff governed by clear financial policies can go a long way in ensuring the success of the American Legion Auxiliary and the fulfillment of our mission.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Janet.

MS. JEFFORD: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT WARD: The financial health of our organization is a testament to the work and dedication of our volunteer finance team. Leading that charge is our national treasurer, Virginia Hobbs, who is here to present the national treasurer report. Virginia?

(Music played)

(Applause)

MS. HOBBS: Thank you, Madam President.

National president, delegates, and members of our convention this year, good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. HOBBS: Oh, thank you. I love to hear words like that.

Madam President, it has been my pleasure to serve as national treasurer this year.

After working 37 years as a federal bank examiner, this year brought me multiple changes and challenges.

My history consisted of dealing with investments, reviewing real estate transactions, and reviewing business transactions. Long time.

I learned a lot of new things this year. This year was an area where I really missed the notebooks, which I'd handled for years. The notebooks were always beneficial, even when reflecting a slight difference.

As a national treasurer, it helps if you have good penmanship. I think back to when I was in grade school. My teachers complained of my poor penmanship. Here as a treasurer, I made skilled -- I always needed skills to have a nice signature, which came in handy on signing new documents, closing state tax documents, and signing for our 990 filings.

Today, we look at the work which transfers through the finance team, with changes which result in many upgrades in our electronic path. This pathway grows as we remain contact with financial operations and ones relating to our membership development.

The area which has been most instructive to me this year has been the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation. With the foundation arriving in 2007, it was a time that I was on the outside looking in and had never really learned a lot about it.

But this year, by serving as national treasurer, it has brought me to more understanding and appreciation of this segment of our auxiliary family.

Thank you for that education.

Our finance team has worked diligently to meet the needs of the divisions it supports. There have been changes in this division, but it keeps rolling on. The interaction with the membership team and the finance team are great recipients of the ongoing improvements in our electric usage, which have been increasing frequently.

I would be remiss if I failed to express my appreciation to Finance Director Gary Ward and the finance team for their efforts and

the assistance I have received from them.

I know it's quick, but Madam President,
this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Virginia.

Effective communication and committed
service are the hallmarks of our national
secretary's role. Please welcome Linda Boone,
who will provide us with the National Secretary
Report.

(Music played)

MS. BOONE: Since you have the
opportunity to review my report in the printed
program, I would like to take this opportunity to
highlight the work of our department secretaries
across our organization.

(Applause)

MS. BOONE: This year, as I met with
department secretaries monthly via Zoom meetings,
I became aware of the many challenges they
balance in their everyday work.

So why should you as a member of your

department be concerned about these challenges? Well, let's reflect on the position of department secretary, or whatever title is used to describe the administrative head in your department.

Most often, department secretaries are engaged to be someone who will be there for multiple years, to provide support and consistency to the organization. They are often the only paid employee, and who get a compensation package that is less than a competitive job outside the organization.

They are drawn to the position because of their dedication to our mission and to the loyalty to the department they serve.

Let's review the skills and knowledge we expect of these individuals holding these positions: human resources, when they manage staff; office management processes like supplies, equipment, maintenance, safety, historical items, program knowledge of our 17-plus committees. They recruit and process membership. They train officers and chairs. They are required to have

financial management and budgeting.

They are expected to be experts on governing documents, to know the culture of both the department and the national organizations, sustain a working relationship with the American Legion, be the conduit to the national organization for department needs.

And they must research and respond to a myriad variety of inquiries, interruption of personal time and long weeks and days to attend meetings. And then, other duties as assigned.

(Applause)

MS. BOONE: Turnover in this position is high. It's not easy to find a person who can fulfill the needs of a department.

When a person leaves, it causes a disruption in getting business needs addressed. Volunteers must step in to provide interim services, and not all-needed business gets done in a correct way or a timely manner.

Searching for, interviewing, and training a new person takes time and is a great

inconvenience. Hiring the right person the first time is a desire so that turnover does not occur in a short time. You will need to make sure you have a detailed job description that outlines expectations for success.

A competitive compensation package is a must to draw qualified and experienced applicants. This is probably the most challenging item for departments.

Look at your expectations and the skills needed to perform. Are you willing to get less skills and offer a smaller compensation package? Or will you then be complaining that the person isn't doing the whole job?

Clarity on the reporting structure and performance evaluation process needs to be in your governing documents. Often, there can be confusion among volunteer leadership about who the department secretary reports to.

Department secretaries provide continuity from one administration to the next and are very valuable in the annual transition

process.

Department secretaries want to be treated with respect and receive appreciation for their work.

If you want to have a long-serving department secretary, I would make sure appreciation occurred by all your members, and you lead by example.

(Applause)

MS. BOONE: Remember: Department secretaries are your partner in successful mission delivery.

I would like to have all department secretaries, or whatever title you have, to please stand so we can show you our appreciation.

(Applause)

MS. BOONE: Thank you, Madam President. That concludes my report.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Linda.

And I just have to say and give her some special thanks. She answered every single one of my phone calls -- and there were many.

We had a Zoom meeting when I was in Europe. It was 12 a.m. to 2 a.m., and she arranged that -- thanks for that, by the way -- and she did an amazing job. So I especially want to thank her with deep gratitude.

Today we celebrate not only the achievements of our organization, but also the tireless efforts of the exceptional staff at our National Headquarters. I honestly could not have executed this past year without every single member of the headquarters team.

(Applause)

(Video begins)

SPEAKER 1: Hey, you made it.

SPEAKER 2: Is now a good time for a tour and some questions?

SPEAKER 1: Yeah. Come on in.

SPEAKER 2: So what's been going on with headquarters lately?

SPEAKER 1: It's crazy here. We just got back from another successful Girls Nation, and we are deep into convention planning -- it's

right around the corner -- Tampa Bay, here we come. And of course, it is award season, which is always hectic, but luckily we have our programs division and our events division to get us set up for success.

(Music played)

SPEAKER 3: Congratulations to all our unit and department award winners.

SPEAKER 4: Thank you so much for all your hard work.

SPEAKER 5: We'll see you in Tampa.

(Music played)

SPEAKER 2: With almost 550,000 members, how do you keep them engaged?

SPEAKER 1: Our events team runs point on that challenge. With over 50 annual meetings, trainings, and webinars, they help keep our members engaged, educated, and ready to deliver mission.

(Applause)

SPEAKER 6: Hi, from the ALA events team.

SPEAKER 7: Whether you flew, drove or teleported here --

SPEAKER 8: -- welcome to convention.

SPEAKER 2: The Auxiliary does so much. How do you make sure you'll be around for future veterans and their families?

SPEAKER 1: Well, we have a development team to answer that very question. From fundraising to member benefits to grants, they really power our mission.

SPEAKER 9: Thank you for making the ALA a philanthropic priority. We'll see you at the Wall of Heroes.

SPEAKER 2: The ALA has a great mission. How do you get the word out about what you do and why you matter?

SPEAKER 1: Well, that's our communications division. From the magazine to public relations to our website, they are the voice of National.

(Applause)

SPEAKER 10: It's so great to see you

all in Tampa, enjoying our national convention.

SPEAKER 11: Don't forget to follow us on social media and tag us in your photos.

SPEAKER 12: Love those pom-poms.

(Applause)

(Music played)

SPEAKER 2: I heard you recently processed 15,000 dues payments by phone. How does that happen?

SPEAKER 1: Oh, I didn't do anything. That's our amazing membership team. They're upstairs.

And actually, it was 20,000, not 15.

(Applause)

SPEAKER 13: Big shout out to our 100 and 102 percent of winning departments:

SPEAKER 14: Arizona and Alaska.

SPEAKER 15: Hawaii and Florida.

SPEAKER 16: Maryland and Michigan.

SPEAKER 13: And New Hampshire and Virginia.

(Applause)

(Music played)

SPEAKER 2: How does national headquarters keep everything running smoothly?

SPEAKER 1: Well, it takes every single staff member for success, but it's our finance division that really keeps us going. From paying vendors to processing donation and staying on the good side of the IRS.

(Applause)

SPEAKER 17: We're excited to process all your donations.

IN UNISON: Thank you for your generosity.

(Music played)

SPEAKER 2: OK. That was great. Thank you so much.

SPEAKER 1: Hey, before you leave, come meet some of my favorite people. Their work is often behind the scenes, but I couldn't do my job without them.

(Applause)

IN UNISON: Congratulations, Merit

Medallion winners.

(Applause)

IN UNISON: Thank you.

(Video ends)

PRESIDENT WARD: For sure, they do an amazing job, and we are so very fortunate to have such an amazing staff. Let's give them a round of applause and make it loud enough for them to hear us backstage.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our national vice president has served this past year with a deep commitment to ensuring that our organization not only thrives today but is prepared for tomorrow. Her dedication to integrity and excellence has set the tone for the coming year.

Please join me in welcoming to the stage a leader who stands at the very heart of our mission, my very good friend, National Vice President, Pam Ray.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Madam National President and friend, Trish, what a great year this has been for you and your theme of "Leading the Way". I've been honored to represent you in so many ways this past year, providing guidance and recognition of our mission on your behalf.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to share what I have been doing. The first photo shows the beginning of our journey together as we served veterans, military, and communities as Power of One girls under Carlene Ashworth. We met and have become lifelong friends. Who would have thought this is where we would be today?

One year ago, we stood together again, taking the oath of office. Serving as vice president has given me opportunities for learning, networking, and serving.

One of my first official service opportunities was to sit on the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Board of Directors. I have learned so much about the opportunities available

through this foundation to serve our veterans.

I hope every unit will take the time to visit the ALA Foundation's website, and their Facebook group, which by the way they now have -- to learn more about the grants available to help provide more opportunity for our veterans.

November brought the opportunity to represent our national president at a special U.S. Vets Gala. U.S. Vets was founded in 1993 to prevent and end veteran homelessness. Its president and CEO since 1996, Steve Peck was retiring and receiving the Judge Harry Pregerson Public Service Award.

We were invited to celebrate his career. National Secretary Linda Boone and I were honored to be a part of this special event on behalf of our national president.

U.S. Vets has over 45 service locations throughout the country. LA is their largest location and home headquarters. Jackie Robinson, Unit 252 of California --

(Applause)

MS. RAY: -- has presented colors at many of their events, and this night was no exception. They did a fabulous job that night. What an honor to be a part of this prestigious event. The networking we were able to do for our veterans was so promising.

One connection we made was special to me as it falls into our Legion Family Be The One mission. Meet Rocio Palermo. She is the Women Vets on Point Coordinator for U.S. Vets, and she is a Navy veteran.

Rocio tells the story of her struggles both in the Navy and after, including twice to end her life, but was saved by the sound of her son's laughter in the other room the first time. The second time, it was the thought of that same son being without his mom.

She now helps other female veterans through mental health crises, homelessness, and more. Someone I would not have met and become friends with without this networking opportunity.

Thank you, Madam President, for

allowing me to represent you.

By the way, Rocio is a dual member of the American Legion family.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: My next opportunity to celebrate mission was joining Madam President Trish at the inauguration in January. For the first time, the American Legion Auxiliary sponsored a table at the Medal of Honor Inaugural Ball.

We were seated with a Medal of Honor recipient and his wife. It was an excellent opportunity to learn more about what we, the ALA, can do for our veterans and their families, especially those who are aging.

There were 24 Medal of Honor recipients at the dinner that evening. Each of them was celebrated and thanked for their service. Many I was able to speak to said it was an honor to be recognized; however, they were just doing their job. What true heroes.

February brought one of my favorite

things: mission training in Boston. Meeting our members, sharing national focus and information on our programs are some of my highlights.

National President Trish sent greetings along with her commanders, and we got to FaceTime with the mission training group in Vegas that day. That was so much fun.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: There's no better way to meet our members and share the excitement of mission than mission training.

Also in February, National Poppy Committee Chair Diana Sirovina and I were asked to represent National President Trish at the National Honor Flight Summit.

We brought the story of the poppy and how poppy funds from the ALA can be utilized for Honor Flight. We gave out swag because, you know, that's what we do, but the great networking with all the local hub leaders was invaluable to us.

This program is our mission. It is for

veterans. It gives many of these veterans their one-and-only opportunity to see the National Memorial, created to honor them and their fallen buddies.

We were so honored to bring President Tricia's thanks to these amazing volunteers, and to see one of our own family, Matt Shuman, complete his tenure as president of the National Honor Flight Board.

Washington Conference is the opportunity to lobby our legislators on the American Legion's legislative agenda. It's the time we hear from the American Legion's Washington, DC, team on what we can do to support legislation that helps our veterans and active military.

As an American Legion Family, we are recognized as strong advocates. Our opinion matters. On Wednesday, as a family, we sat behind National Commander Jim LaCoursiere as he testified before the joint Senate and House Veterans' Affairs committees.

Your leadership, present and future, visited the Hill with our departments to let our national legislators know we are here to fight for our veterans and military.

National President Trish tasked me with working with our national committee chairs to ensure her vision for the year of "Leading the Way" was carried out. She had a wonderful group of national chairs who worked diligently all year to be sure that happened.

I brought greetings, on behalf of all, at all Zoom meetings, or other meetings, that she was unable to attend. What an honor to do so. I was so pleased that members felt they could contact me to assist them with any questions or struggles they might have encountered.

Thank you, Madam President, for allowing me to further the mission of the ALA by representing you this past year and spreading your "Leading the Way" message for department excellence and furthering our mission.

Thank you to the members of this great

organization for electing me as your vice president. It has been an honor to serve you, our veterans and active military.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I speak a lot about leadership, and I really believe that part of leadership is supporting the team that will follow and make them more successful and stronger and better.

Your national vice president has not delivered podium comments to convention in quite some time, but I absolutely wanted Pam. She is the second-highest person in the voluntary leadership as national vice president. And as you can see from her amazing report, she did a lot of things for our organization, supporting me and supporting you, and I am forever grateful. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The national ALA fundraising focus has been Veteran Projects Fund grants, supporting projects that meet the needs of veterans, military, and their families.

One of these grants helped New York Unit 1450 furnish the Foreverly House, the first and only housing program in the region specifically designed for single female veteran mothers and their children.

Take a look at this life-changing house.

(Video begins)

(Applause)

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: So one morning we were having breakfast with a female veteran who was also involved with veteran services.

MR. O'CONNOR: -- had left the Air Force, and like a lot of veterans who sometimes have a tough time struggling from the move from military life to civilian life, and she had two kids.

We were talking about the services and

that there was a hole that existed, and that was, there was no place for veteran moms and their children to be housed during that sometimes-difficult transition from military to civilian life. And we said, well, why don't we just build a place like that?

MS. HOLMAN: I got involved because Cheryl gave me a call --

(Applause)

MS. HOLMAN: -- and told me about the program, and that to build a house for women veterans and their children --

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: -- we have to find a place for these homeless veteran moms and their children. And there is no place. Even the homeless shelters can't take children.

MR. O'CONNOR: The need for services for veterans doesn't seem to be abating at all. In every community, there's something that somebody can do, trying to identify one of those holes in the system and then asking for help.

MS. NAZZARO: Those veteran mothers and

their children move into Foreverly House. They aren't just receiving a beautiful home. We provide extensive case management services to the families that move in.

So anything that the mothers may need, local community resources, that they might not know are in the area, but as well as being a school liaison for their children, and just making sure that the transition is comfortable for both the mother and the children.

MS. HOLMAN: The Foreverly House is a name that I will love forever, because forever, these veterans that move in here can stay. As long as they are happy and this is what they need, they can stay here forever. So it's "Foreverly".

MR. O'CONNOR: Sheila Holman, who's very active with the American Legion, did a very significant amount of work in terms of financial donations and help from the American Legion.

MS. HOLMAN: And she said, I have these needs, and do you think you can help me? And I

was like, I'm for it.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: One of our board members was a member of the Auxiliary. She told me, you have to meet Sheila, and whatever you ask her, she'll get done. And she was handed me applications, apply for this, apply for this, through this legion, through that legion. And they never said no.

MS. HOLMAN: It has been absolutely phenomenal in as far as writing grants and having them approved.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: They actually paid for the furnishings. Now they're going to put computers in for the kids to do their work on.

MS. HOLMAN: We have donated exercise equipment. We've donated presents for them to give to their families at Christmas. We do their food pantry and give them paper supplies and female supplies. And that we serve them and say, we're ready for you, and here we go, and we'll help you out with whatever you need.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: But there were a lot

of just \$50 donations, \$100 donations.

MS. NAZZARO: So although I wasn't here for the start of Foreverly House, I did get to see the end of the construction, and the referral process to get our first family into the house, and the ribbon cutting, which was a very cool experience.

The family that we brought in was a few weeks after the ribbon cutting, so it was very cool to announce to all of our funders and our partners who came to the ribbon cutting, that we did have our first family move in.

It is a single veteran mom with three children who struggled. So one of her children is also developmentally disabled. We had met with her, told her about Foreverly House, and -- just to gauge her interest -- we had received a referral form. You know, she was kind of hesitant moving to a new community. And then she saw the place.

To go from living in an attic to moving into a three-bedroom, freshly built, furnished,

beautiful home is something that is unimaginable for some of these veterans.

They were thrilled, and they are extremely happy to be here, and settling in very nice.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: They give of themselves and their time because they have so much care about our veterans.

MS. HOLMAN: I feel that every town or every state, city should have a Foreverly home. They should have a place for our women veteran and their children to go to.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: And the plan is to expand our services, because there's very few housing programs for homeless female veterans. And they are the highest-rising group in veteran homelessness.

Women need as much support as men do, and we're very fortunate to have an agency where we can serve both women, men, and now children.

MS. NAZZARO: We do have plans for phase two. When Cheryl and Ray spoke with the LA

group, they had put in approval for the second phase, which is two more units next door, right here at the same property.

MR. O'CONNOR: When we went through the approval process, we had enough space on this site for two buildings, two family homes. We've got one done. We've already got approvals to put the second one in.

MS. NAZZARO: And we're hoping to start securing funds for that as early as the beginning of next year. I am going to continue to hit the ground running, to build our community relationships, strengthen our mission, and expand our services.

MS. HOLMAN: Reach out to VAs. Reach out to other veterans organizations. Speak to their veterans. Connect yourself with people there, and say, what can I do? And then go back to your unit and make a plan.

MS. NAZZARO: I'm hoping to bring in a younger population to the veteran community to get help from the younger population around the

seven counties that we do provide services in.

MS. HAGUE-PEREZ: They don't do this to be in the newspaper. They do this from their heart. And I think that's what makes a difference from the American Legion Auxiliary to other social groups.

MS. HOLMAN: There is a rewarding factor in helping people out, especially veterans, and knowing they made us safe by going over to war and putting their lives on the line. Isn't it time that we made them safe?

(Video ends)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Pretty awesome, right? I was at the Foreverly House, and it was amazing. So thank you, New York.

It's so amazing to see all the action at our Wall of Heroes. It proves that we have some of the most generous members.

Here to share the incredible impact our generous donors have made in the lives of our veterans and their families, please welcome the

American Legion Auxiliary Foundation President
Cathleen MacInnes.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. MACINNES: Thank you, Madam
President Trish.

The American Legion Auxiliary
Foundation exists for one reason, to provide
funding for local and national programs of the
American Legion Auxiliary, today and for future
generations. We help units and departments to
lead the way for America's veterans.

The Foundation provides grants to
American Legion Auxiliary entities from the
Mission Endowment Fund, the Veteran Projects
Fund, and the Veterans Creative Arts Festival
Fund.

The Mission Endowment Fund allows the
foundation to contribute to ALA programs like
Girls Nation and the Spirit of Youth
scholarships. The Mission Endowment Fund has
granted \$37,000 to ALA Girls Nation, and 20,000

to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund this year.

National President Trish Ward prioritized the Veterans Project Fund to inspire engagement and education.

She introduced the American Legion Auxiliary Challenge Card Deck. These decks were given to donors who contributed \$35 or more to the Veteran Projects Fund. This fund provides grants which provide assistance to units and departments for veteran-focused projects.

Many ALA entities partner with other veteran service organizations to maximize both their financial impact and to enable them to assist the greatest number of veterans.

I probably don't need to tell you about Unit 1450 in New York, providing furniture and equipment to the Foreverly House --

(Applause)

MS. MACINNES: -- because you've seen the video.

A recent grant to California Unit 283

will provide video gaming systems for the State Veterans Homes in Palo Alto, which are recovering from the Paradise fires as well as other PTSD issues.

The ALA Foundation financially supports the ALA in its co-presentership of the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival each year, granting \$75,000 for the 2025 program.

In addition, the Foundation awards local Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants to ALA entities so that they can help their VAs feed the national festival.

We'd like you all to apply for grants, but if you're not sure where to start, the ALA Academy Veteran Projects Fund Grant Writing Workshop will, in less than an hour, provide you with instructions, walk you through a sample, and offer tips to ensure your success.

A little audience participation, if there are any of these facilities in your area, please rise and remain standing: facilities for homeless veterans, transitional housing for

veterans -- I don't see anyone standing yet; this makes me nervous -- Fisher Houses, VA medical centers, or State Veterans Homes.

OK. Now, look around. We hope all of you submit grant applications in 2026. And if you're not sure what the facility needs, just ask. Check their wish lists on their websites or reach out directly to them. Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. MACINNES: As you know, the foundation gives away a lot of money. So how do we raise it? Well, we conduct only four fundraising events each year, but donations are accepted all year round should you be moved at any other time.

This year, donations totaled \$108,466 to the Mission Endowment Fund; \$102,820 to the Veteran Projects Fund -- a record for that fund, thank you, Trish -- and \$111,821 to the Veterans Creative Arts Festival Fund.

(Applause)

MS. MACINNES: Great job, everybody.

Over \$300,000.

And 2025, I'm happy to report, is the inaugural year for American Legion Auxiliary Foundation Awards. The Donor Champion Award, to the department with the largest per capita contribution to the combined ALA Foundation funds. The winner, the Department of Hawaii.

(Applause)

MS. MACINNES: And the Veterans Champion Award, to the department with the greatest number of approved ALA Foundation grants. The winner is the Department of New York.

(Applause)

MS. MACINNES: Congratulations to both of you and to all the members in those two departments. These awards were presented last evening.

This report would not have been possible without the dedication of the ALA Foundation Board and the ALA National Headquarters staff in the development and finance

divisions -- and you met them earlier.

I thank each one of you for your contributions to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation, for honoring your loved ones at the Wall of Heroes at this convention -- and by the way, the mints are back this morning -- and most of all, for using Foundation grants to enhance your programs serving America's veterans.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks, but I believe we do have resolutions.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: Can we have the resolution read?

Maybe we can.

We're going to move on.

(Laughter)

MS. RAY: So. Here we are. National Constitution & Bylaws Chair Norma Tramm has been working hard to ensure our governing documents are maintained so that we may easily answer questions about our governance programs

and eligibility.

Please welcome Norma Tramm to the stage for her report and presentation of amendments.

(Music played)

MS. TRAMM: Good morning.

And thank you, National Vice President Pam. We appreciate that.

First, I'm going to start with a quote from President James Madison, known as the father of the Constitution, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

We are charged with educating members on the importance of having effective governing documents at every level of our organization.

In this past year, as the Constitution and Bylaws chair, I've been impressed with the way departments have accomplished this. For example, New Jersey has a template governing documents available on their department website. It's easy to download and change to a specific

unit.

Patrice Sorensen, South Dakota.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: She compiled a list of all the units that have updated their constitution and bylaws. And then the district presidents were encouraged to work with the units that had not updated their documents.

Kansas, Minnesota, and Oklahoma had an education session at fall conference in which attendees learned how to write standing rule amendments that would capture current practice and current operations.

Virginia aimed to instill confidence in grassroots leaders by guiding them in reviewing and updating their bylaws and constitution.

Wisconsin has a texting option for members seeking guidance in updating their governing documents. A simple conversation would assist in understanding how to make changes in their documents.

West Virginia reviewed governing

documents and returned them with suggestions.

Arkansas, Ohio, and other departments formed committees to update their documents.

Some members are not very interested in reading and learning about our governing documents. Imagine that.

(Laughter)

MS. TRAMM: So we need to be -- we need to inspire them in creative ways.

So imagine seeing this as you enter the meeting room.

(Slide shown)

(Laughter)

MS. TRAMM: At the very least, you would approach their table just to get a closer look. And while they have your attention, they can hook you on "governing documents".

Have you thought of holding workshops that include governing documents? Indiana had workshops to help members understand how and what to change in their constitution and bylaws.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: I believe that understanding is the key to having our members become interested in learning and gaining knowledge.

South Carolina department chair attended district meetings to talk about the importance of governing documents and offer assistance when needed. Sometimes candy will make them stop and check out a trifold.

Rose Cherry, of Texas --

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: -- had a trifold at their mid-winter conference. The trifold had sample constitution and bylaws and standing rules. Rose also had questions, as you see.

(Slide shown)

MS. TRAMM: And they were to test their members. And if they gave the correct answers, they received candy. A great way to get members' attention.

Not all members are able to attend department or district meetings, so Wyoming

shares their department constitution, bylaws, and standing rules on their department website. And they make sure to update, each year, after their department convention.

Colorado makes sure that all units are aware of proposed changes by distributing them to their members and placing them on their department website.

It's important to use all the tools available so that members can be kept informed of changes made to the governing documents.

Think you're too busy to read our constitution and bylaws? Well, if our national president can do this while traveling around to all 52 departments, you can too. And I'm sorry she's not here to see all those cool pictures.

And also, here's Janice, from Arizona, reading the C&B on her way to help the underserved in other countries.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: I think we can all find time to read our governing documents. We are

leading the way to success in updating our governing documents.

National Vice President Pam, this concludes the platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: Thank you, Norma. You can continue.

MS. TRAMM: So we have 15 proposed amendments this morning; 3 amendments to the national constitution and 11 amendments to the national bylaws. And one amendment to the national standing rules.

MS. RAY: Thank you, Norma.

Before we begin consideration of these amendments, the chair would like to remind the delegates of the convention Standing Rules.

Per Standing Rule 12, all motions must be presented on a motion form. Forms are located at the elections and tally table, located at the back of the room where you picked up your keypads this morning.

The debate will be limited to two

minutes for each speaker. No person shall speak on the same question more than twice without the consent of the convention.

I also remind you that we do have a timer here to fairly enforce the rule. The rule also states that during debate, delegates' alternate guests are to remain seated within their own delegation or assigned seating area unless they are approaching the microphone, completing a motion form, or exit, or entering the general session hall.

Finally, Rule 11 states that only voting delegates of the convention may make motions and address the convention during debate.

Are there any questions on the rules?

Norma, please proceed with presenting the amendments.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you.

It is the responsibility of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee to bring all proposed amendments to the floor for deliberation, apart from the endorsement status

by the Convention Committee. Therefore, regardless of the Pre-Convention Committee's recommendation on the adoption of the amendments, I will, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, move for the adoption of all amendments.

Remember, all departments and delegates received advanced copies of these amendments.

Before I present the proposed amendments on behalf of the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move that if any amendment is adopted, it will not take effect until the close of the 2025 National Convention.

MS. RAY: It has been moved that if any amendment is adopted, it will not take effect until the close of the 2025 National Convention.

Are there any objections?

Hearing none, the motion is adopted.

Thank you.

You may continue, Norma.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you.

Yesterday, I explained that we will

consider the following proposed amendments in a bundle. They are 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 15. It's on your screen.

As a reminder, items in this bundle will not be open for discussion, and one vote will be taken on the adoption of the bundle.

If there are any of the proposed amendments that you would like to discuss and consider separately, you may do that now.

MS. RAY: Does anyone wish to remove a proposed amendment from the bundle? Please step to a microphone.

MS. MORRIS: Mic 3.

MS. RAY: Chair recognizes microphone 3. Glynis?

MS. MORRIS: How did you know, Pam?

MS. RAY: I know that voice.

MS. MORRIS: Good morning, everybody. Glynis Morris from the great State of Nevada.

I'd like to have numbers 6 and 15 removed from the bundle, please.

MS. RAY: The request is for number 6

and number 15 to be removed from the bundle.

MS. MORRIS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. RAY: Are there any other requests?

MS. STRICKLAND: Microphone 2.

MS. RAY: Chair recognizes microphone
2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin, Department
of Arizona. I would like number 12 removed from
the bundle, please.

NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT RAY: Number 12
removed from the bundle.

Chair recognizes the delegate at number
3.

MS. CLAPP: Good morning, Madam
National Vice President.

MS. RAY: Good morning.

MS. CLAPP: Nicole Clapp, Past National
President, Department of Iowa. I would request
that amendment number 3 be removed from the
bundle.

MS. RAY: It's requested number 3 be
removed from the bundle.

Are there any more requests? Any more requests?

OK. Sit tight one moment.

All right. One last time. Amendment 3, 6, 12, and 15 have been requested to be removed. So the bundle will include numbers 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13. That's 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13.

MS. TRAMM: Madam National Vice President Pam, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the following adopt -- I move the adoption of the bundle, which includes the following proposed amendments: 2, 4, 5 --

MS. JONES: Excuse me. I couldn't move fast enough; I'm sorry. Debbie Jones from Florida.

MS. TRAMM: Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. JONES: I just couldn't move fast enough.

Can we please remove 3, 6, and --

MS. RAY: Those are already requested.

MS. JONES: Not -- not 3, 6. I'm

sorry. It was 4, 8, and 13; 4, 8, 13.

NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT RAY: 4, 8, and 13 have been requested to be removed; 4, 8 and 13. So now your bundle is down to 2, 5, 9 and 10; 2, 5, 9 and 10.

MS. TRAMM: We'll try that again.

Madam National Vice President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of the bundle which includes the following proposed amendments: 2, 9, 10, and 5.

MS. RAY: The question is on adoption of the bundle. All those in favor of the bundle, numbers 2, 5, 9, and 10, press number 1 on your voting keypad. All those opposed, press the number 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam Vice President, our fobs are not working in Pennsylvania.

MS. RAY: Thank you. Keep trying. We're going to play another song, I'm sure. Keep

trying.

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Pennsylvania, are you getting some positive responses? None at all?

Some are? OK.

There are staff members walking to help, so -- Chrystal is over here between microphone 2 and 4.

The votes are coming in, we can see that. So just keep trying.

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Thank you for your patience. We still have votes coming in; that's why we have not made any decisions.

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Thank you. Voting is closed.

We've spoken with Parliamentarian, and the number of votes is 756 to the affirmative, 107 to the negative.

Therefore, the bundle of 2, 5, 9 and 10 have passed.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: With the bundle adopted, we will process the remaining proposed amendments. We will be doing them in numerical order.

Amendment number 1 starts on page 5 of your 20 Days Prior to National Convention amendments packet.

MS. TRAMM: With the bundle adopted, we will process with the remaining proposed amendments. For those of you following along, proposed amendment number 1 starts on page 5 of your 20 Day Prior to National Convention amendment packet.

At Saturday's Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Meeting, the committee voted to not recommend adoption of proposed amendment number 1. This recommendation was in part because this proposed amendment contains several separate changes, which can get confusing.

With that in mind, we will handle proposed amendment number 1 -- seriatim -- sorry.

"Seriatim" is just a fancy parliamentary term for "piece by piece". So put

that in your document so you'll know that.

In other words, we will consider the changes to each section separately.

MS. RAY: Are there any objections to handling this piece by piece?

(No audible response)

MS. RAY: Hearing none, Norma, please continue.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you.

We will first consider the title change. On behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move to strike the current title of Constitution Article III, "Eligibility", and replace it with the new title of "Membership".

MS. RAY: The question is, changing the title for Constitution Article III from Eligibility to Membership. Is there any discussion?

(No audible response)

MS. RAY: OK.

Are you ready for the question? All those in favor of the motion to change the title

of Constitution Article III from Eligibility to Membership, press number 1 on your voting keypad.

All those opposed, press the number 2 key.

Please vote now.

(Music played)

MS. RAY: OK. Voting is now closed.

Please show the results.

The vote is 707 to the affirmative, 103 to the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted.

(Applause)

MS. RAY: Norma, please continue.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you.

On behalf of the National Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move to amend Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 3, which reads: "A member whose dues are paid up to date, and who is not subject to suspension or expulsion, shall be considered in good standing, and the member shall be entitled to full membership rights, privileges, and benefits in the unit."

MS. RAY: The question is on amending
Constitution Article III by adding a new Section
3. Is there any discussion?

Microphone 4.

MS. MILLER: Becky Miller, Department
of Wisconsin. May I suggest that we do a voice
vote on these sections unless the vote is
obviously close?

MS. RAY: We can't do a voice, but we
can do standing, which means we count everybody
individually.

(Laughter)

MS. MILLER: Then we might as well use
the --

MS. RAY: OK.

MR. MILLER: -- OK. Thank you.

MS. RAY: Thank you.

Is there any further discussion on this
motion?

(No audible response)

MS. RAY: Hearing none. Are you ready
for the question? All those in favor of amending

Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 3 that reads: "A member whose dues are paid up to date and who is not subject to suspension or expulsion, shall be considered in good standing, and the member shall be entitled to full membership rights, privileges, and benefits in the unit."

Press the number 1 key on your voting pad if you're in favor. If opposed, press the number 2. Please vote now.

(Music played)

MS. RAY: Voting's now closed. Please show the results. The vote is 786 in the affirmative, 36 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted. And the governing documents are amended.

Please continue, Norma.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you. On behalf of Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move to amend Constitution Article III by adding a new section, 4, which reads: "Each unit of the American Legion Auxiliary, except department

headquarters unit, has the authority to decide its membership," and shall be -- "and shall be responsible for verifying eligibility of prospective members, transfer or new."

The question is on amending Constitution Article 4 -- excuse me. The question is on -- well, it --

MS. RAY: They skipped a part, didn't they?

MS. TRAMM: Yeah.

MS. RAY: They skipped a part. That's OK. You're good. You're good.

Good. The question is on amending the Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 4. Is there any discussion?

MS. DAVIS: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: Microphone 2.

MS. DAVIS: This is Marilyn Davis from Vermont, Barre Unit 10. And my concern is I believe the word "perspective" is incorrect and should be "prospective" member.

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. That is an editorial

change. Thank you for pointing that out.

Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hearing none. Are you ready for the question? All those in favor of amending Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 4, which reads: "Each unit of the ALA, except department headquarters units, has the authority to decide its membership and shall be responsible for verifying eligibility of prospective members, transfer or new." All in favor, press the number 1 key. All those opposed, press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

The vote is 743 in the affirmative and 38 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted. And the governing documents are amended.

Please continue, Norma.

MS. TRAMM: The next piece of this proposed amendment is to add a new number 6, which currently reads: "Membership can only be offered upon an affirmative vote of the unit members."

During the discussion at the Pre-Convention Meeting, some members expressed options that the wording was too limiting.

Given that the proposed wording is factual and necessary, we need a way to keep the proposed wording intact while still addressing the opinions expressed during the pre-con.

For this one, we will call in the big guns. We work directly with The American Legion national judge advocate to develop wording that maintains the default process of requiring unit members to vote on a new member but allows for units to adopt their own process to accept new members.

On behalf of the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move to amend Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 6 to read: "Membership can only be offered upon

an affirmative vote of the unit members", with the amendment to adding the following, "unless an alternative procedure is set forth in the unit bylaws."

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on amending Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 6, with the amendment to add the following words at the end: "unless an alternate procedure is set forth in the unit bylaws."

We will first process the amendment to the proposed amendment, which is to add, "unless an alternate procedure is set forth in the unit bylaws", and we will put it up on the screen for you.

Is there any discussion on adding the words?

Are you ready for the question? All those in favor of adding the new --

MS. MORRIS: Excuse me, Madam President. I have a question on this.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. MORRIS: Thank you. Glynis Morris,
Department of Nevada. Sorry. I got confused
there for a second.

So if the unit bylaws are changed to
add an alternate version of how this gets done,
does that not then change the unit bylaws to be
more stringent than our national bylaws? And
we're not allowed to do that.

PRESIDENT WARD: This allows for a unit
to include an alternate method to voting on their
membership.

MS. MORRIS: So it would not be in
conflict with either department or national,
which we're not allowed to do?

PRESIDENT WARD: No.

MS. MORRIS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 3.

And please state your name and
department, and if you're speaking in favor or in
opposition to the amendment.

MS. CADWALLADER: Lisa Cadwallader,

Department of West Virginia. And I actually have a question.

In the rewording, should we not be removing the word "only"?

PRESIDENT WARD: This is the only way the wording would allow for a different option for the unit other than voting, is this language.

So the answer to your question would be no, "only" would not be appropriate.

MS. CADWALLADER: OK. Can you repeat the reworded?

PRESIDENT WARD: "Unless an alternate procedure is set forth in the unit bylaws." And it should be on the screen.

MS. CADWALLADER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MR. RASMUSSEN: Mike Rasmussen, Department of Utah. I recommend that we do not accept this, because it doesn't make a provision for the department unit which has no members there. They're not -- they're not going to meet.

They're not going to be able to have any acclimation in any way.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

Are you ready for the question -- I'm sorry. Hold, please.

The Section 4, "Each unit of the ALA, except department headquarters units, has the authority to decide its membership and shall be responsible for verifying eligibility", so it's already been adopted and identified that the department headquarters unit does not have that.

MR. RASMUSSEN: OK. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: We're voting on the amendment. The read "unless an alternate procedure is set forth in the unit bylaws." Press the number 1 key in your voting keypad to vote in favor. All those opposed, press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: The voting results are in. Please show the results.

The vote is 709 in the affirmative and 113 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment to the proposed amendment is adopted. We will now consider the proposed amendment as amended.

Is there any discussion?

MS. WATT: Madam President, microphone 2. Will I get 3 --

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes -- the chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. WATT: Maureen Watt, Montana. My votes didn't count last time on the vote. I got red on all of three of them that we were voting on. So could we have more time, especially for those of us that are in the back? Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for letting us know. So we do have the required votes to accept the amendment. But yes, thank you for

that note and we will give you more time.

Appreciate that.

MS. HARDACRE: Madam President?

Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. HARDACRE: Jane Hardacre, Department of Florida. I have a question. Since we were going by section by section, and under the current warnings, Section 5 was not under the current wording, don't we also need to address Section 5?

PRESIDENT WARD: There is no changes in Section 5. There was no changes to Section 5.

MS. HARDACRE: OK. I apologize. It wasn't in the current wording in the first column, so I --

PRESIDENT WARD: OK.

MS. HARDACRE: I apologize.

PRESIDENT WARD: No. No worries.

I'm getting caught up with where we were, guys, so thank you for letting me get up to

speed here.

Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: We will now consider the proposed amendment as amended. All those in favor of amending Constitution Article III by adding new Section 6 as shown on the screen, please press the number 1 key on your voting keypad to vote yes. Please press the number -- all those opposed, please press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

The vote is 732 in the affirmative and 100 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are amended.

Please continue, Norma.

MS. TRAMM: On behalf of the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move to amend Constitution article III by adding a new

Section 7, which reads: "Membership may be terminated by resignation. Any member in good standing may resign from their unit, but no member may resign when in debt to the organization by failure to pay dues, by unit disciplinary action of expulsion. Any person who has been expelled may reapply to any unit at any future time."

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is in amending Constitution Article III by adding a new Section 7. Is there any discussion?

MS. FICKLIN: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin for Arizona. I move to amend the last section to read: "Any person who has been expelled is expelled for life from any unit and or any department."

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Do you have that in writing that you could please submit to the head table? Thank you.

We're putting this amendment up on the screen and we will be striking "or department", because members join units; they don't join departments.

So Rose, that will be stricken. So it will be "unit".

We need clarification from Arizona.

Rose, could you please come forward?

Amendment requires a Second.

AUDIENCE: Second.

PRESIDENT WARD: It's been moved to amend by adding the red, "is expelled for life from any unit." Is there any discussion?

MS. MORRIS: Madam President?

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at some microphone.

MS. MORRIS: 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: 1 -- thank you.

MS. MORRIS: Yeah, 1; I'm at number 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: Fantastic.

MS. MORRIS: Deborah Morris, Department of New York. I do not agree with this.

As any member, we changed our name --
our last names, quite frequently, like I have.

(Laughter)

MS. MORRIS: And I could come back
three years later and join another unit with a
new number. So I don't agree. I don't think
this will work.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your
discussion.

Is there any further discussion?

MS. SHAW: Madam President?
Microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. SHAW: Crystal Shaw of Wisconsin.
My question about this is when they say "expelled
for life", were they expelled because they stole
from the organization, or they expelled because
of interpersonal issues with another individual?
If it's with an individual --

PRESIDENT WARD: Expulsion is
expulsion.

MS. SHAW: OK.

MS. KRAFT: Microphone 4, please --3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone --

MS. KRAFT: 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: -- 3.

MS. KRAFT: Rose Kraft of the
Department of South Dakota. My concern regarding
being expelled for life is that the standards and
conflicts from one unit is not always the same
throughout every unit. And this is not favoring
in this amendment, so I would vote against it.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your
comments.

Is there any further discussion?

MS. BECKER: Microphone 2, please.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. BECKER: Julie Becker, Department
of Michigan. My concern is we do have PUFL
members. What happens to them?

PRESIDENT WARD: Good question. Once

expelled, you would lose the ability to remain as a member, so that PUFL would no longer be valid.

MS. DEGENNARO: Madam President,
microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. DEGENNARO: Michele DeGennaro, Department of Florida. I think we're a little confused with expulsion versus revocation.

So when a member is revoked, their membership is revoked; versus, I just got into a tiff with my unit and now they don't want me there.

Revoking their membership would not allow them to go to another unit, so that would be a more egregious offense.

So is that the issue, that we're using expulsion versus revocation of the membership?

PRESIDENT WARD: So I'm hearing expulsion and revocation, same thing.

MS. DEGENNARO: Not according to our membership.

According to our membership, we can expel somebody. They can go to another unit. Or we can revoke their membership, and they cannot go to any unit. And that is according to our ALAMIS.

I know that's not what we're doing currently, and that's why I just wanted clarification.

PRESIDENT WARD: So I just had an opportunity to speak to Kris. And that is not in the governing documents, according to parliamentarian, which is what we're trying to do here, which is clarify the language.

MS. DEGENNARO: Exactly. Thank you.

MS. MARTIN: Madam President,
microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. MARTIN: Tamara Martin, Department of Minnesota. When you're saying you're revoked, you're expelled from the unit, is that by unit vote or -- because it's nowhere in there does it

just state how it, you know, is the whole unit needing to vote to expel, or is it an individual, whether it be the president or such that's --

PRESIDENT WARD: The unit -- excuse me for interrupting. The unit should have disciplinary process in accordance with fundamental fairness in their bylaws on how that action would occur within the unit.

MS. KEEVER: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. KEEVER: Cathy Kever, Department of Idaho. When you say "expelled is expelled", if there are exceptions -- which we are working on right now with National -- are we wasting our time?

There are exceptions to expulsion, and we believe that our member was not fairly treated when she was expelled.

PRESIDENT WARD: Expelled is expelled. So if there is an appeal process in place and

membership is returned through the appeal process, then that member would still be eligible for membership.

If the membership is revoked, that member would not be eligible under this amendment.

MS. KEEVER: So we would do the appeals process through National? Because she was expelled from National.

PRESIDENT WARD: It would need to --

MS. KEEVER: It went from unit to department to national.

PRESIDENT WARD: If it follows the appeal process that your unit and department has in place, and the member's rights are restored through the appeal process, she would be -- she or he would be eligible for membership.

If the membership is revoked, it is revoked. So under this amendment, if membership is revoked, they would not be eligible for unit membership.

MS. KEEVER: Thank you.

MS. DAVIS: Madam President, microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. DAVIS: Mary Davis, Department of Washington. Let's see if I can get this out. I've always been told that our membership is based on the DD214 of the service member that we are using for our eligibility.

Belonging to a unit is merely a formality of belonging to a specific or a specific group of women or men -- and men -- it's a new concept for me. Because of that, I speak against this amendment, because what we're doing is we are now expelling someone whose eligibility, based on a DD214, is no longer applicable. And I can't believe that we would dishonor our veterans in that way. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. According to information I've just received at ALAMIS, it's only expulsion. Revocation is not an option.

Is there any further discussion?

MS. FICKLIN: Madam President,
microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin, Arizona.
AI says the -- expulsion versus revocation --
"Expulsion is the permanent removal from an
organization such as a school for serious or
persistent rule violations; while revocation is
the cancellation or annulment of something
granted like a license or permission, rendering
it void."

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. AI, wow.

MS. WHITAKER: Madam President,
microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. WHITAKER: Madam President, Beth
Whitaker, Department of North Carolina. My
question is, is when we get a new application for
a member, how will we know that they've been

expelled from another unit?

PRESIDENT WARD: Good question.

Not being hugely familiar with all the ins and outs of the ALAMIS membership system, I'm being told that that can be inspected in the membership system within your own department.

So -- so yeah, so if it's tagged in ALAMIS, and the new department went to sign that person up, they would see that. They would see that issue with that individual as long as the name is exactly the same.

MS. WHITAKER: So the question I have is, our unit votes on membership before we enter it into the ALAMIS system. So we wouldn't know that until we voted and accepted that member.

PRESIDENT WARD: It's true.

MS. WHITAKER: OK.

PRESIDENT WARD: It's helpful if, when you give your name and department, if you share if you're speaking in favor or in opposition to the amendment. Thank you.

MS. CADWALLADER: Madam President,

microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. CADWALLADER: Thank you. Lisa Cadwallader, Department of West Virginia. I'm actually in favor of this. I believe that if a member has been expelled, it is basically for very good reason, maybe theft or some other harsh type experiment, not just because Sally didn't like Jane.

And they have the right to appeal. So they can appeal to their department. If that fails, they lose their appeal and they're expelled, why would we want them to cause trouble in any other unit?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

MS. GRAVES: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. DRAKE: Marti Drake, Department

of Indiana.

When you enter someone into ALAMIS as a rejoin, that might populate something. If you enter them as a new member, which units have full access now, there's nothing that's going to stop them from knowing if that person is expelled or not.

Yeah. Especially if -- well, if you get a transfer, you're going to have to send that from out of state. You're going to have to send that to the help desk. The help desk will look it up, and then they should be able to see that.

But if a new member joins a unit, you know, five cities away, they're not going to be able to tell because they're going to enter it into the database as a new member, and it will not show whether they're expelled or not.

PRESIDENT WARD: Since I'm your national president, I can't offer an opinion. But thank you for that comment.

MS. GINTHER: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. GINTHER: Leslie Ginther, Department of Alabama. I would just like to point out that I speak in in favor of this change because it's not an actual change.

Currently, your Unit Guide Book says, on page 62, "according to the ALA National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules, a member subject to suspension or membership revocation is no longer a member in good standing and cannot transfer to another unit". In other words, expulsion from the unit of ALA is expulsion from the organization.

So therefore, this is already current practices. And the change that Rose has presented falls in line with our current practices are.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. And we all know that the Guide Book is not our governing documents. It's simply a guide that offers best

practices. So what we're doing here is putting things in governing documents. But thank you for those comments.

Is there any further discussion?

MR. RASMUSSEN: Madam President, microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MR. RASMUSSEN: My name is Mike Rasmussen. I'm with the Department of Utah. I am the first male department president in the history of this organization.

(Applause)

MR. RASMUSEN: And I would speak against this amendment, because why on Earth do you want to limit the membership of this organization to people that we may or may not like?

Disciplinary action goes through, but understand that my wife was a Legionnaire, and only in the last five years have I been able to become a member.

It is important that we keep this organization as open and as clear as possible, and deal with individual problems on an individual basis, and make this organization as open and as inclusive as possible. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comments. Is there any further discussion on this amendment?

MS. KUNTZ: To microphone 1, please.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. KUNTZ: Laurie Kuntz, Department of Colorado. I speak against the proposed because we have had many members that have had personal conflicts in units, and they kick them out because of the personal conflicts.

(Applause)

MS. KUNTZ: Not necessarily anything to do with forgery, nothing. It's just personal conflicts. And then they go to another unit, and they prosper. So I speak against this.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comments. Is there any further discussion?

MS. WARNIER: AnnaMae Warnier, microphone 3, from the Department of South Dakota.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. WARNIER: Madam President, I call for the vote. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: That requires a second.

AUDIENCE: Yay.

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there any objection to ending debate?

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. We will vote on the amendment to the amendment. All in favor of the amendment: "A person who is expelled is expelled for life from any unit", please press number 1 on your voting key. All those opposed to the amendment, please press number 2.

(Music played)

MS. WONG: Madam President. Madam President.

PRESIDENT WARD: Hold, please.

MS. WONG: Barbara Wong from Department of New York. We did not vote for the previous question.

PRESIDENT WARD: We accepted by acclamation anyone wishing to -- everyone wishing to close debate, and it was unanimously voice voted.

MS. WONG: All right.

PRESIDENT WARD: The voting results are in. The results of the vote is: Yes, for the amendment, 420 votes; and no, 404 votes. The ayes have it and the amendment is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: We will now vote on the amendment as amended.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Madam President, microphone number 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes

the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Kristen McLaughlin, Department of Ohio. A good portion of our Ohio delegation, their votes never went through.

PRESIDENT WARD: Michigan as well?

We said it would be epic.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Because the vote is so close, and we're hearing that some of the keypad fobs are not operational, we will revote by taking a standing vote.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: If you are in favor of the amendment: "Any person who has been expelled is expelled for life from any unit" -- I don't see it on the screen, I'm sorry -- "Any person who has been expelled is expelled for life from any unit."

If you are for this amendment, please stand.

MS. GREELY: Excuse me, Madam President?

PRESIDENT WARD: Only delegates.

MS. GREELY: Madam President,
microphone 3. I have a question for you.

PRESIDENT WARD: We're in the middle of
voting. Can you please hold?

MS. GREELY: It's about voting, and I
can't get all my votes counted for my delegation
because I'm only one person standing.

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. Sure.

Please sit down. The chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. GREELY: Thank you so much. Sierra
Greely, Department of Maine. I have four votes
because we have three delegates who are not here.
And I'm only one body to stand up. How do I get
all four counted?

PRESIDENT WARD: Well, so we seem to be
at a crossroads here, folks. Voting fobs, some
folks are saying aren't working. We've got
people who are registered for this convention who
aren't here, and we can't count people who aren't
here.

So we have two choices: We can go with the voting fobs, or we can go with the standing count, or we can go with a ballot vote.

Microphone 3? The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. PADDOCK: Vickie Paddock, Wyoming. I don't know what year it was, but we -- when you stood up to vote with your fobs, when it went through, you sat down. That way you would see how many were left.

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm up for it if you want it.

OK? All right. We're going to revote again on the amendment. Any person who has been expelled" -- it's the red -- it's like my jacket -- "is expelled for life from any unit," please stand up. Everyone who has voting, please stand up.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Madam President, microphone 3. Quick question please.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: If we are voting and everyone has a key fob, we should only have one fob; am I correct?

If there are some of us that your delegates did not arrive, and you have three or four fobs, I do not think that is very ethical, as far as voting.

PRESIDENT WARD: Registered voters are allowed one vote. We vote by the fobs, the key fob. If that person is not here, it's carried by the delegation.

Everyone who's voting, please stand up. If you are holding more than one fob, do not sit down until all of them have been triggered green.

If you are in favor of the amendment as shown on the screen in red -- is expelled for life from any unit -- the person who has been expelled is expelled for life from any unit -- and you are in favor of that amendment, please press the number 1 key.

If you are opposed to that amendment, please press the number 2 key.

And if you are voting once, when you see green, sit down. Please vote.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Voting fob over here that hasn't taken. Are there any others? One.

MS. ESPINOLA: Madam President, microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. ESPINOLA: Evelyn Espinola, Department of Colorado. We're finding out that if you take them out of the plastic, they're working better.

PRESIDENT WARD: We'll take that one and run with it. Thank you. The amendment as amended, "Any person who has been expelled is expelled for life from a unit." 443 in the affirmative. 439 in the negative. The affirmative has it, and the amendment is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: We will now vote on the amendment, as amended. "By resignation, any

member in good standing may resign from their unit, but no member may resign when in debt to the organization by failure to pay dues, by unit disciplinary" -- help me out here up on the screen. Any person -- "by unit disciplinary action of expulsion, any person who has been expelled is expelled for life from any unit."

We're voting on it, as amended. Is there any discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those in favor of the amendment as amended, please press the number 1 key. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Microphone 2.

MS. TRAMM: If I could just make a quick announcement, ladies and gentlemen. Please stop pushing the channel button. All of your

things are on the correct channels. You're not helping us. OK. So push your button for your vote, when you feel it click, let go. Do not keep your thumb on the button. And I'm sorry, but you'll have to probably try a couple times, but please stop changing the channels. You're making our job a little harder.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. OK. The voting results are in. This requires a two-thirds amendment to pass. OK? Requires two-thirds. All those in favor of adopting, 465. All those opposed, 388. It did not achieve two-thirds. The amendment is not adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. It has come to our attention regarding Section 5 of Article III. And we want to thank the delegates for bringing that to our attention. It was a typo error. It should have been bolded. Section 5 in Article III. All we're doing is moving it. It is existing language. We're moving it from Article

IX, Section 5 of the Bylaws to Article III, Section 5 of the Constitution, which is a more appropriate place for this language.

Is there any objection to moving it to Article III?

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: Hearing no objection, remain silent. We will move it to Article III, Section 5. Thank you.

MS. MASEGILL: Excuse me. Before we go any further, Crystal Masegill (phonetic), Department of Georgia, is there any way that we could have about a ten-minute break? There are several people in the back talking, they really need to move and use the restroom. I just -- they asked me to come out.

PRESIDENT WARD: No restroom breaks at this committee. No. I'm kidding. I'm kidding. I just need a little bit of laughter. All right. We'll take a ten-minute recess.

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: No. Just no time?

All right. If you need to go, just exit and go.
OK. It's the best I can do for you. Fair
enough? Got to go. If you need to leave, please
do. But please come back. You can get back in.
OK. Now, where am I going? We are proceeding
with the business of this organization. Please
welcome Norma Tramm back to the microphone.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you, my dear. Thank
you, Madam President. Madam National President,
proposed amendment number 3 seeks to force --
seeks to add force majeure language to allow for
continued business and election of officers in
times of emergency. The amendment was proposed
by the National Constitution and Bylaws
Committee.

If adopted, this section will read as
follows: Section 1. "The American Legion
Auxiliary National Convention shall be held
annually at the same time and place as the
convention of The American Legion, except for
when it is determined undesirable due to cases of
emergency or national disaster, for the purpose

of electing officers, receiving reports and transactions, such other business as shall properly come before it."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. National President, Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment number 3 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 3 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion?

MS. JOHNSEN: Madam President, microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. JOHNSEN: Christine Johnsen, Department of Wisconsin. When reading this, I just asked who makes the determination? So I

wish to propose an amendment. I move that proposed amendment number 3, be amended to add the words, "by the Executive Committee to the NEC" so that it reads, determined undesirable by the Executive Committee to the NEC.

PRESIDENT WARD: Would you please write that on a form and bring it to the table?

MS. CLAPP: Madam President, microphone number 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. CLAPP: Good morning. Past National President Nicole Clapp.

PRESIDENT WARD: Morning.

MS. CLAPP: Good morning. Finance Committee member. This amendment was never presented to the Finance Committee. And I am concerned, because to host National Convention, if you look in your NEC information, our portion costs us \$902,000.

If we would have to take on the additional expense of hosting our own National

Convention, because nowhere in the document does it say how the election of officers conducting a business will occur, we would then have to incur another approximately 68 percent expense that currently the Legion maintains.

So I just think it's something for consideration of the expense that this could incur. And realizing anyone -- for me, as national president that had to do it two years, I can understand why this wants to be considered, I just think we need more clarification. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. So the form regarding the amendment has not been brought to the head table. We'll get it on the screen. Please hold, please.

The amendment requires a second. "Except for when it is deemed undesirable by the Executive committee to the NEC", it requires a second.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

PRESIDENT WARD: So we are voting on

the amendment to the amendment to insert "by the Executive Committee to the NEC". Is there any discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Are you ready for the question? All those in favor of adopting the amendment to the amendment, please press the number 1 key on your voting fob. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key. Please vote now. This requires a majority to pass.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm seeing lots of folks seated, so to adopt the amendment requires a majority. 586 in the affirmative. 262 in the negative. So the amendment is adopted.

We will now vote on the amendment as amended. Getting it on screen. Hold on.
Section 1: "The American Legion Auxiliary National Convention shall be held annually at the same time and place as the convention of the American Legion, except for when it is determined undesirable by the Executive Committee to the NEC

due to the cases of emergency or natural disasters, for the purpose of electing officers, receiving reports and transacting such other business as shall properly come before it." Is there any further discussion on this amendment?

MS. GROUT: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. GROUT: Coral May Grout, Department of Massachusetts. If you stop and think, we do our conventions with The American Legion. If there's a hurricane in downtown Tampa, and The American Legion chooses to cancel the National Convention, what you're going to do if you vote yes on this, is that we can have our own convention. You want to come to Tampa in the hurricane, or you can go somewhere else, and that's going to cost us 2 to \$3 million.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for the discussion. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Seeing none, hearing

none, we will vote. All those in favor of adopting the amendment as amended, please press the number 1 key on your voting fob. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key. We will vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. People still voting? I'm going to announce the results of this vote. It requires a two-thirds. All those in favor of adopting the amendment was 306 in the affirmative, and 539 in the negative. The amendment is not adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Please welcome Norma back to the podium.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Amendment 4. National -- Madam National President, proposed amendment number 4 seeks to add wording for clarification. The national organization has the authority to cancel department charters. Therefore, it is possible for a state to not have a department.

The amendment was proposed by the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee. If adopted, the section will read as follows:

Section 3: "There shall be no more than one department in each state and in the District of Columbia, and there may be one department in each territory of the United States. The National Executive Committee may establish departments or units in the insular and other possessions of the United States, and may also establish units in foreign countries".

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 4 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 4 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. We will vote.

All those in favor of adopting the amendment, please press the number 1 key. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: The results of the vote are in, and the amendment has been adopted in the affirmative by 784 and -- sorry, 50 in the negative. So this amendment has been adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Norma, you're requested at the podium. That's OK.

MS. TRAMM: Goodness, goodness, goodness.

PRESIDENT WARD: All is good.

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 6 seeks to clarify duties and responsibilities of the national secretary to match current practice. The amendment was proposed by the national Constitution & Bylaws

Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Section 5, National Secretary. It shall be the duty of the national secretary to record proceedings and submit official meeting minutes of the National Executive Committee meetings, to be retained at the National Headquarters. The national secretary has the responsibility to ensure National Convention proceedings are approved by the Minutes Approval Committee and distributed.

"The national secretary serves as the official liaison between the National Executive Committee and any department under disciplinary action. The national secretary is responsible for supplying updates to the National Executive Committee regarding the status of the department's disciplinary action.

"It is the responsibility of the national secretary, as a corporate officer, to be educated on the authorized use of the American Legion Auxiliary trademarks, trade names,

patents, and copyrights. The national secretary will report issues regarding trademarks, trade names, patents, and copyrights to the National Executive Committee. The national secretary shall perform other duties as provided in the governing documents or as assigned."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 6 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. The question is on the adoption of proposed Amendment 6 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion?

MS. MORRIS: Microphone 3, Madam Chair.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. MORRIS: Glynis Morris, Department of Nevada. I speak in opposition to this for two

reasons. One, it says that the national secretary of the convention proceedings will be distributed. It does not explain to whom.

Number one -- number two, on Saturday's meeting, Secretary Boone stated she was tasked with the distribution of all of the NEC meetings and convention proceedings. But if this section is removed and if the secretary is removed from the Executive Committee, how would this be accomplished? That's number one.

Number two, the Legion judge advocate has the final authority over all emblems, trademarks, names, patents, and copyrights. Our national secretary, according to this amendment, will have to be educated regarding the same. Who would be dealing with the lack of compliance with all of our trademarks?

Does that then mean that any discipline, censure, or any other type of a reprimand, then have to come from the Legion judge advocate over us to determine any type of reprimand over the units and members that are

misusing any of our protected emblems?

The secretary should be the one that at least is the liaison between us and the Legion. The secretary can then say, wait, we'll just send a letter of cease and desist. They can't use the emblem this way. That way, it's not constantly going back and forth. An egregious error I could see coming from the national judge advocate. Our secretary still needs to be in control of our emblems and trademarks. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hearing none, we will vote. All those in favor of adopting the amendment. All those in favor of amendment number 6, please press the number 1 key on your voting key. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: This amendment requires two-thirds to pass. The vote is in.

The affirmative is 650 and the negative is 171.

The amendment is adopted.

I have some good news and I have some great news. Good news first, we're going to recess at 12:15 for the lunch. And the great news, we're going to be back here at 2:00 to continue with constitution and bylaws.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: So we're going to recess at 12:15. Actually, I'm going to bang the gavel. But before we do, I just want to mention how wonderful it was to have those service members on this stage. And it reminds us really about our mission of supporting our veterans and their families. And that team was absolutely fantastic.

And I hope you have an opportunity to say hello to some of them, because it really brings us back to the center and core of our mission. And that's really, really what inspires me to continue to lead the way on behalf of The American Legion Family. So enjoy your lunch and

I'll see you at the luncheon.

(Music played)

(Recess)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'd like to make --
this is to the pages. When members exit the hall
to go into the outer hall, for whatever reason,
they go into the outer hall for, please let them
back in. OK. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. We're going to
get started. I would like to remind everyone
that it is super helpful when you go to the
microphones to say whether you are speaking in
favor or in opposition to the amendment. That's
really helpful for us. So speaking in favor,
give the rationale, speaking opposed, give the
rationale. That would be helpful and we
appreciate it. Thank you.

I would welcome back to the podium your
Constitution & Bylaws national chair from the
great state of Minnesota, Norma Tramm.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, proposed amendment 8 seeks to clarify that a DEC has authority to discipline members of a department headquarters unit. The amendment was proposed by the National Constitution & Bylaws Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows --

MS. WILLIAMSON: Microphone 1 -- I believe. Sorry. Lisa Williamson, Department of Alaska. Aren't we on proposed amendment number 7 not 8? 8 was bundled, if I remember correctly.

PRESIDENT WARD: We need to do 11 before 7. So 8 is the next one on the docket according to National Registered Parliamentarian Chris Dickey.

MS. FICKLIN: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin, Arizona. I'm the one that pulled this, and I'm starting to

think I pulled it by mistake. And the reason why I pulled it is, in the original letters, Section 4 about all persons handling funds. And I swear I looked last night, and I found it somewhere, and I didn't write it down where. And now I can't find it.

So if somebody else could verify that it's in one of the others along while I continue to look. Otherwise, I apologize for pulling it.

PRESIDENT WARD: We still have to process it. So Rose is apologizing, and we accept your apology.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Norma, back to you.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you, Madam President.

Continuing on. "Section 1. Departments of the American Legion Auxiliary are separate entities that operate independently as affiliates of the American Legion Auxiliary national organization. Departments shall be governed by their own department constitution and/or bylaws, rules, and policies which shall not conflict with the

national Constitution & Bylaws, national Standing Rules, national rules, and policies.

"Section 2. Departments shall be chartered by the National Executive Committee, and shall be comprised of the units within their respective areas. A minimum of 500 adult members shall be required to issue a department charter. Each department charter shall be signed by the national president and the national secretary.

"Section 3. Each department shall have a department governing board hereafter referred to in these national governing documents as the Department Executive Committee.

"Section 4. Each department shall have the following department officers: department president, department vice president, department secretary, department treasurer -- or department secretary/treasurer -- National Executive Committee person, an alternate National Executive Committee person, and may have a chaplain, historian, and such other officers as the governing documents of the department may

prescribe. If a department officer is a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, they shall be in good standing in their unit.

"Section 5. Departments shall have the authority to create intermediate bodies between the units and the department, to act as a liaison between such organizations, and for the purpose of promoting the programs of the American Legion Auxiliary. An intermediate body shall be administratively subject to the department and totally under department jurisdiction.

Department Executive Committees shall have the authority to set forth responsibilities and limits of all intermediate bodies. In no event shall these responsibilities and limits established by the Department Executive Committee usurp the prerogatives of the national organization departments and units.

"Section 6. Departments shall have a Department Headquarters Unit. The Department Headquarters Unit will not have officers nor governing documents. The Department Executive

Committee shall have the authority to discipline members of the Department Headquarters Unit."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of the proposed amendment 8 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 8 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question? For this --

MS. TRACY: Mic 3, please, Madam President.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. TRACY: Jenny Tracy, Department of Indiana. I am against this. Under Section 6, department shall have a headquarters unit. The part I don't like is "the Department Headquarters

Unit will not have officers nor governing documents". I believe a unit -- Headquarters Unit should be guided as other members in -- within their units.

PRESIDENT WARD: There are no officers in headquarters units. Therefore, there would not be the ability to draft those documents. Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: We will take a standing vote. All those in favor of adopting this amendment, please stand. All those opposed -- please sit down. All those opposed, please stand. The standing count has it, and the amendment has been adopted.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 11 seeks to capture all references to discipline in one section, with clear explanations and wording. The amendment was proposed by the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Section 4. With the exception of the national president and national vice president, there shall be no salaried officers. Necessary expenses incurred by national officers, National Executive Committee persons and chairman of national committees in the exercise of their duties to the American Legion may be paid for by the national treasury when authorized by the national budget, or authorized by the national president, and approved by the National Executive Committee.

"Article XI. Discipline. Section 1. Unit Member Discipline. (a) Each unit, except for Department Headquarters Unit, has the responsibility for the discipline of its members for any good and sufficient cause. All discipline must be imposed in accordance with the principles of fundamental fairness, which includes notice and an opportunity to be heard. Units shall adopt procedures for member discipline.

"Disciplinary action may include any of the following. Warning: a formal written statement delivered to the member outlining the misconduct and expectations for future behavior. Probation: membership is retained under specific terms and conditions for improvement for a specific period, no longer than a year. Suspension: temporary loss of any or all membership rights and privileges for a specified period no longer than a year. Expulsion: loss of membership for severe or repeated violations.

"(b) A member disciplined by the member's unit may appeal the unit's disciplinary action in writing to the Department Executive Committee. The Department Executive Committee shall adopt procedures to handle such appeals.

"Section 2. Department Headquarters Unit Member Discipline. The Department Executive Committee has the responsibility for the discipline of its headquarters unit members for any good and sufficient cause. All discipline must be imposed in accordance with the principles

of fundamental fairness, which includes notice, and an opportunity to be heard.

"Department Executive Committees shall adopt procedures for member discipline.

Disciplinary actions may include any of the following. Warning: a formal written statement delivered to the member outlining the misconduct and expectations for future behavior. Probation: membership is retained under specific terms and conditions for improvement for no more than one year. Suspension: temporary loss of any or all membership rights and privileges for the specified period no longer than a year. Expulsion: loss of membership for severe or repeated violations.

"(b) A member disciplined under this section may appeal the disciplinary action to the department convention delegates. The department convention delegates shall adopt procedures to handle such appeals.

"Section 3. Unit Discipline. (a)
Units attached to departments may be disciplined

by their department executive committee for any good and sufficient cause.

"(b) Foreign units not attached to a department may be disciplined by the National Executive Committee for any good and sufficient cause. Disciplinary action by the National Executive Committee are final.

"(c) All such disciplinary action must be imposed in accordance with the principles of fundamental fairness, which includes notice and the opportunity to be heard. The Department Executive Committee shall permanently keep a record of all disciplinary actions, including communications or meetings, concerning the disciplined unit.

"Disciplinary actions may include any of the following. Warning: a formal written statement delivered to the unit outlining the misconduct and the expectations for future behavior. Probation: unit charter is retained under specific terms and conditions for improvement for a specified period no longer than

a year. Suspension: temporary loss of any or all unit's rights and privileges for a specified period no longer than a year. Cancellation of charter: the Department Executive Committee may submit a request to the NEC to cancel the charter of a unit for severe or repeated violations.

"A unit who has been disciplined by its Department Executive Committee may appeal the disciplinary action to the National Executive Committee by following the procedures in the Standing Rules.

"(e) The National Executive Committee shall have the authority to overturn, modify or uphold the disciplinary action of the Department. The National Secretary shall inform both the unit and the Department Executive Committee of the decision of the National Executive Committee, whose decisions shall be final.

"Section 4. Department Discipline. The NEC may discipline a department for denying a member or unit the rights of fundamental fairness, which shall include notice, and the

right to be heard, or for failure of the department leadership to adhere to their governing documents.

"(b) If the National Executive Committee determines that the department violated the rights of a member, usurped the authority of a unit, or department leadership failed to adhere to department governing documents, the National Executive Committee may impose disciplinary actions upon the department.

"Disciplinary actions may include any of the following. Warning: a formal written statement delivered to the department outlining the misconduct and expectations for future behavior. Probation: department charter is retained under specific terms and conditions for improvement for a specified period no longer than a year. Suspension: temporary suspension of any or all department rights and privileges for a specific period no longer than a year. Cancellation of charter: the department charter may be canceled for severe or repeated

violations.

"(c) The NEC shall adopt procedures for the handling of appeals or complaints.

"Section 5. Discipline of National Leadership. (a) NEC may discipline any member of the national leadership which shall include national officers, past national presidents, National Executive Committee members from all departments, and NEC ratified National Committee appointees for violation of the Ethical Code of Conduct as adopted by the NEC.

"(b) Disciplinary actions may include verbal counseling, written or verbal apology, written or verbal censorship from NEC, probation with corrective terms that encourage restorative justice, suspension from participating in or exercising voting rights on national committees and/or national activities for the defined period of time in compliance with applicable state laws, termination of NEC membership, national appointment and/or national elected position, as applicable.

"Once terminated for cause from the NEC, the member is ineligible to hold future positions of the national leadership and recommendation to unit for expulsion of membership.

"(c) The NEC shall adopt procedures for the handling of any alleged violations of the Ethical Code of Conduct.

"(d) The NEC may temporarily suspend the accused from all or some duties, and rights of national activities pending the disposition of the case without prior hearing. Whenever failure to suspend such duties and rights might be reasonable, anticipated to result loss or damage to property or human life, or serious damage to the reputation of the American Legion Auxiliary."

The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 11 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 11 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion?

MS. WARNIER: Microphone, 3 please.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone three.

MS. WARNIER: AnnaMae Warnier, Department of South Dakota. I believe this is just a housekeeping thing, but on 11.3(c), it says member, and we're talking about units.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for pointing that out. It has been corrected.

MS. GINTHER: Microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Alabama at microphone 3.

MS. GINTHER: Leslie Ginther, Department of Alabama. I speak in opposition to one section of this amendment. I agree that we do need ways to discipline the department unit members, but in this current amendment, I think

we might be opening a can of worms. The Section B(2) -- I'm sorry, 2(b) states, "the member disciplined" under this is section -- "under this section may appeal the disciplinary action to the department convention delegates. The department convention delegate shall adopt procedures to handle such appeals". As the saying goes, praise should be in public, and then discipline in private.

You're asking the DEC to also violate its own confidentiality agreement also further delay any appeal, as department conventions are once a year, and this could also open up departments to slander lawsuits if something were to be aired, somebody's dirty laundry to the entire department. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Point of clarification, the language referenced was recommended by the national judge advocate of the American Legion.

MS. KUEHNER: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. KUEHNER: Shay Kuehner, Department of Texas. On Section 4, department discipline, it -- I believe it's number B, if the NEC determines the department violated members' or units' rights of fundamental fairness, et cetera, et cetera, they may impose discipline action. This infers that there is an appeal process to the NEC for a member, but that was never addressed in unit member discipline. It ended at going to the DEC.

So if you're saying that if the NEC determines that the department violated members' or units' rights of fundamental fairness, the only way they would even know that is if a member had appealed it. So it infers there is a NEC appeal process, but we don't know anything about that, because it wasn't mentioned under member discipline. Does that make sense?

PRESIDENT WARD: So the member appeals to the DEC. And if fundamental rights are not

given at that juncture, then there is the authority to appeal. And we've seen where departments have taken direct action against the member or the unit without that appeal to the DEC.

MS. KUEHNER: Right. So the member does have the opportunity from there to go further to the NEC instead of accepting the decision of the --

PRESIDENT WARD: If the fundamental rights -- so it's about process at the NEC. The SEC is looking at process. Was the process handled correctly? Was fundamental fairness given, opportunity to be heard -- the NEC will look at the process.

MS. KUEHNER: Right. But the only way the NEC would know there's a question about that is if the member appealed --

PRESIDENT WARD: That's correct. Yes.

MS. KUEHNER: -- it to the NEC.

MS. KUEHNER: So that is an option for members.

PRESIDENT WARD: Yes.

MS. KUEHNER: OK. Thank you.

MS. MORRIS: Microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone three.

MS. MORRIS: Glynis Morris, Department of Nevada. I'm speaking in opposition to this for two reasons. One, just because this is presented that the C&B is presenting that this was adopted on Saturday does not mean that it was a unanimous vote to be adopted, number one. Number two, under section -- hold on. Glasses. Section 5, letter (b), all the way down on the bottom. Once -- is under the national discipline. "Once terminated for cause from the NEC, the member is ineligible to hold future positions of the national leadership". I personally believe it should stop there. When does National get to go ahead and actually tell a unit they need to expel one of their members?

PRESIDENT WARD: This is current language in the governing documents, so what's

happening here is it's being gathered and put into one place. So this is currently in the governing documents. Are you ready for the question?

MS. COPELAND: No. Microphone 4.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President?

PRESIDENT WARD: Sorry. Microphone 4.

I'm sorry. It's really difficult to see. It's pretty dark out there. So the chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. COPELAND: OK. Teresa Copeland, Department of Texas. I am opposed to this for the reason that in all of the discipline we're talking about the fundamental rights of fairness and the right to be heard. However, in our national leadership, it's stating here that if they're disciplined for any reason, they can be removed, they can't run for office and this and that, but they have no right to be heard.

We're giving the unit headquarter members the opportunity to go to a department convention to appeal, but leadership is not

getting that opportunity. People in the position of leadership can be railroaded just as easily as a unit member. So why are they not given the opportunity to come to a National Convention and state their case and have their appeal also?

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comment. Is there a further discussion?

MS. FICKLIN: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Hold, please. So point of clarification. The ones that would go to the department convention are the members in the headquarters unit. So just clarifying it's only that group, for the delegate from Texas.

MS. FICKLIN: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate from Arizona at microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin from Arizona. I speak in favor of this, and this is why. For the last two years in Arizona, I have done nothing except explain to units how the process is to discipline a member. There is one little paragraph in the guidebook that says,

as -- they have to be heard, they have to have sufficient notice. Back in 2012, in the guidebook, there was a process of how to discipline, kind of the steps.

So we're having some issues in Arizona that we went through between Robert's Rules of Order Section 20 or XX -- it's Roman numerals -- and the 2012 guidebook. We created a process on -- for every unit how to follow if there's an issue with a member, similar to what we have in here now, and we passed it at our last convention, because there was nothing else in our governing documents that gave us how we do it.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: OK. My favorite thing and yours, the voting keypads. The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 11 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. All those in favor --

MS. COPELAND: I'm so sorry, I couldn't get up here quick enough. I'd like to move to make an amendment. Sorry.

PRESIDENT WARD: Would you please put it on an amendment form and bring it to the head table?

MS. COPELAND: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT WARD: Any amendments have to be in writing and done immediately.

So microphone 2.

MS. DAVIS: Yes. Marilyn Davis, Vermont. I have an editorial comment. Section 5, the last sentence. There's a sentence that says, "once terminated for cause from the NEC". And it goes to a semicolon. And then after that is the section that should be added in front of that sentence, because it's one of the disciplinary actions that may be included.

And the other question I have is the NEC has added handling -- they need to do procedures for handling of appeals or complaints, but neither the department nor the units have to

handle complaints -- procedures for handling complaints. So I wondered why that was left out?

PRESIDENT WARD: Each group of the organization could have their own procedures for handling that those actions. So this is an attempt to gather up all the information the American Legion Auxiliary has in its governing documents, get it in one place so that there is a -- like the delegate from Arizona mentioned -- a clear process on how action is to occur. So each entity of the organization can have their own process and procedures.

MR. DAVIS: But -- OK. MR.

RASMUSSEN: Microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone four.

MR. RASMUSSEN: Mike Rasmussen, the Department of Utah, call for a vote.

PRESIDENT WARD: Requires a second.

AUDIENCE: Yay.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those in favor of closing discussion, please say aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed?

Please say no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: The ayes have it and discussion is closed. The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 11 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. All those in favor of adopting amendment 11, press the number 1 key on your voting keypad. All those opposed, press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: This amendment requires a two-thirds vote to -- OK. Well, this amendment requires a two-thirds vote to pass. We have a two-thirds. I understand that it hasn't triggered, but the vote -- the vote is 682 in the affirmative and 150 in the negative. The affirmative has it. And the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are amended.

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 7 seeks to rearrange information to present uninterpreted section on NEC authorities, followed by executive committee to the NEC responsibilities. The amendment was proposed by the National Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Section 2. Authority. The National Executive Committee shall adopt the annual budget for the national organization, adopt policies and standing rules unless otherwise noted in the National Constitution or these bylaws, review financial statements and accept the national annual audit, ratify committees, confirm the nomination of the national secretary and national treasurer, confirm committee and other national appointments, and confirm the appointment of officials not otherwise provided for in these bylaws, address all questions regarding the election eligibility and capacity of national

officers per the National Standing Rules, address all questions regarding conduct of entities as provided in these bylaws, levy assessments as needed, ratify the cancellation of charters, receive or filing reports from national subsidies, organizations, and other duties and responsibilities that are the normal function of a corporate board of directors.

"Section 6. Executive Committee to the NEC. There shall be an executive committee to the National Executive Committee. The purpose of the Executive Committee shall be, 1, to review, research and make recommendations to the NEC on matters requiring NEC action; and 2, to address and act on time-sensitive matters subject to ratification by the NEC, except those duties reserved for the Executive Committee in the bylaws Article V."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted -- be not be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution &

Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 7 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 7 as distributed. The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends amendment not be adopted. Is there any discussion?

MR. RASMUSSEN: Mike Rasmussen, Department of Utah.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Utah, microphone 4.

MR. RASMUSSEN: I just wanted to point out that this is language is just to be moved. It's not to change any of the language. So it's just to move the things to a certain place. If we wanted to change any of the language, we can always do that at a separate time. Thank you.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you. Lisa

Williamson, Department of Alaska. I think that our sticking point or at least my sticking point at the Constitution pre -- pre-con meeting was the word "eligibility". Saturday at our pre-con meeting, we approved standing rules 11 units, number 7 on page 52. And it was the judge advocate who said membership eligibility is subject to review only at the time of initial submission or transfer.

So any subsequent challenges are without effect. We have a word in there that I would like to have removed. I make the motion in regards to this amendment, that we simply remove the word "eligibility" in that section. Here's the form.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It's been -- an amendment has been proposed to strike the word "eligibility" in Section 2. Is there a second?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there any further discussion?

MS. COPELAND: As the one who brought forth the amendment, may I have a moment? I know that this has moved from another section, but while we're fixing things, let's fix this too.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: We will vote on the amendment. All those in favor of striking the word eligibility in Section 2 of this amendment, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please signify by saying no.

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: The amendment has passed and is adopted. We will now vote on the entire amendment. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: We will do a standing vote. All those in favor of amendment 7, as amended, please stand. Please be seated. All those opposed, please stand. Two-thirds has been achieved and the amendment, as amended has been adopted. Thank you. You know, we just had lunch, so I just thought it'd be a good idea to get everybody moving around, right.

Welcome back, Norma.

(Laughter)

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 12 seeks to update language to delineate roles of units, departments, and national as they pertain to charter cancellations, removes language on discipline, as that information has been absorbed into the new bylaws 11, discipline. Clarification only. The amendment was proposed by National Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Article XI. Cancellation of charters.

Department charters. Section 1. The National Executive Committee may cancel a department charter following the disciplinary provisions in these bylaws.

"Section 2. A department requesting to surrender its charter requires a department convention body vote. Cancellation of a department charter will become final upon National Executive Committee approval.

"Section 3. Upon cancellation of a department's charter, the National Executive Committee may authorize agents to take custody -- custody of all records, assets, and property of the department, and to take all necessary steps to close the affairs of the department. The national organization may act in an administrative role until units can affiliate with another department.

"Section 4. In no event shall the national organization be required to assume any of the department's debts.

"Unit charters. Section 1. The

Department Executive Committee may submit their request to the NEC to cancel the charter of a unit as a result of disciplinary action.

"Section 2. A unit requesting to surrender its charter requires notification to all members, a unit vote, and approval of its department executive committee. Cancellation of a unit charter will become final upon National Executive Committee approval.

"Section 3. Cancellation of a unit charter shall be in order when two or more units merge, or when a unit ceases to function.

"Section 4. The National Executive Committee may prescribe rules of procedures to be followed in the cancellation of unit charters.

"Section 5. In the event a Department Executive Committee submits a unit charter for cancellation without the consent of the unit, the unit shall have the right of appeal to the National Executive Committee as provided in the Standing Rules."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-

Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 12 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 12 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion? Are you ready for the question?

MS. GRECA: Oh, yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. GRECA: This is my name is Anita Greca from the Department of Michigan, and it's just an edit -- edit for the document under the department charters. It goes from section -- it was 3 to 4, but it actually should be 5. Am I correct, because there's four -- Section 4 already there? No, it says Section 4. I mean, it was 3, but they have that 3 crossed off and

have 4, "in no event shall the national organization be required to assume", but just before that is Section 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comment. We show it as numbered correctly. Numbers are stricken and then renumbered next to it.

MS. GRECA: Oh, OK. I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT WARD: That's OK.

MS. GRECA: I see it now.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: We will do a standing vote. All those in favor of amendment 12, please stand. Thank you. Please be seated. All those opposed, please stand. Thank you. Requires a two-thirds vote. The vote -- the ayes have it in the affirmative -- has it, and the amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are amended.

MS. TRAMM: Thank you, Madam President. Madam National President, proposed amendment 13

seeks to omit redundant wording. Moved language from standing rules on units into bylaws. The amendment was proposed by the national Constitution & Bylaws Committee.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Section 1. Units of the American Legion Auxiliary are separate entities that operate independently as affiliates of the American Legion Auxiliary national organization. Units shall be governed by their own unit constitution and/or bylaws, which shall not conflict with the National Constitution and Bylaws, National Standing Rules, national rules and policies, department constitution and bylaws, or department rules and policies.

"Section 2. Those who desire to form a unit shall apply to the post to which it will attach, and the department in which it resides, as provided in the Standing Rules. Upon receipt of a properly executed charter application from the department, the unit charter shall be signed by the national president and the national

secretary.

"Section 3. The minimum number of members to charter a new unit shall be ten senior members, with the exception of a department headquarters unit that shall have no minimum membership requirement.

"Section 4. A unit shall be given the name, location, and number of the American Legion post to which it is attached.

"Section 5. The qualifications and process for establishing and existing as a unit in good standing shall be as provided in the Standing Rules.

"Section 6. All persons handling funds of the unit shall be bonded by a reputable, solvent bonding and surety company, or shall be covered by fidelity crime insurance in an adequate amount as determined by the unit."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. National -- Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws

Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 13 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Norma. The question is on the adoption of proposed amendment 13 as distributed. The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Is there any discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those in favor of amendment 13, please stand. Thank you. Please be seated. All those opposed, please stand. The standing ayes have received two-thirds vote in the affirmative, and the amendment has been adopted. The governing documents are amended.

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 14 seeks to change the composition of the Executive Committee to the NEC. The amendment was proposed by Executive

Committee to the NEC and NEC.

If adopted, the section will read as follows: "Bylaws Article IV Section 2. There shall be an executive committee to the National Executive Committee. The purpose of the Executive Committee shall be; 1, to review, research and make recommendations to the NEC on matters requiring NEC action; and 2, to address and act on time-sensitive matters subject to ratification by the NEC, except those duties reserved for the Executive Committee in the bylaws Article V.

"Number 3, the executive director shall be hired, disciplined, or terminated by a majority vote of the Executive Committee of the National Executive Committee in accordance with the terms of employment established by the Executive Committee. The executive director shall regularly be evaluated by the Executive Committee. In the event of a vacancy in the position of executive director, the Executive Committee may name a person to serve in that

capacity until a new executive director is hired.

"The national president, national vice president, the immediate Past National President, and five National Executive Committee persons, one from each division who will be appointed annually by the national president through an application process, and one past national president named by the executive director annually, shall comprise the Executive Committee to the National Executive Committee.

"The executive director shall be invited to all meetings of the Executive Committee, to the National Executive Committee, except when the meetings pertain to the executive director's performance."

The Constitution and Bylaws Pre-Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of proposed amendment 14 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the

adoption of proposed amendment 14 as distributed.

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention

Committee recommends the amendment be adopted.

Is there any discussion?

MS. DUSCHECK: Mic 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone four.

MS. DUSCHECK: Past National President Diane Duscheck, Wisconsin. I love the idea of having an application process to assist in the choosing of the five NECs, but I'm opposed to the NECs being appointed by the national president. What I've noticed in the past is that when a person receives an appointment from the national president, they feel an obligation to that person, and we see it in our departments also.

Therefore, if a decision has to be made, it seems that we already have five people that are aligned with whatever the national president would like. Therefore, in the sentence that describes the makeup of the NEC -- and it's the one that reads -- it's the one that starts

off, "the national president, national vice president, immediate Past National President".

In that sentence, I move -- I move to amend this amendment by striking the words "appointed annually by the national president" and inserting the words "elected annually by the National Executive Committee persons in their respective division".

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I have it on the screen.

MS. TRAMM: OK.

PRESIDENT WARD: The amendment has been amended to strike, "appointed annually by the National President" and insert "elected annually by the National Executive Committee persons in their respective divisions". I heard it was seconded. Is there any further discussion? We're discussing the amendment now. The chair recognizes -- the chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. JEFFORD: Yes. Janet Jefford,

Department of Connecticut. I do have a concern with that amendment just proposed because of the logistics of having the current divisional NECs -- I think that's what she's referring to -- elect their representative on the executive committee, correct?

PRESIDENT WARD: Correct.

MS. JEFFORD: Is that what she's proposing?

PRESIDENT WARD: Correct.

MS. JEFFORD: No. Just because they're in the same division doesn't mean they know the background, the experience of that -- of all of the NECs in that division. And the executive committee should be composed of people who have some sense about organizational effectiveness and how nonprofits function and function and operate. So I speak in opposition to that amendment.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President, microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes

the delegate at microphone 1.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Please forgive me if this is an appropriate discussion, but I need some clarification. I believe the Constitution -- the Pre-Convention Constitution & Bylaws Committee voted not to recommend number 14, and our national chairman stated that the committee did recommend. I'm not pointing fingers, I just would like the record to be set that we, as --

PRESIDENT WARD: You are correct.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: It was voted not to adopt. So would you like us to start over and reread? Are you understanding? OK. Thank you for catching that. Our apologies.

MS. MACINNES: Madam President,
microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. MACINNES: Cathleen MacInnes,
Department of New York. I rise in support of

this amendment. While the -- the respective NECs may not know each other well, they will have an opportunity to review the applications and can meet therefor and discuss the applications and then interview each of those who has applied. So I believe it certainly does give them the ample opportunity.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. WILLIAMSON: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Lisa Williamson, Department of Alaska. I also support this amendment. Members should be represented by those of their choice, not by a national president. That is the democratic way.

Caucuses could ensure that their division is represented by choosing and making a decision on their behalf. It ensures that those selected are accountable to the people they represent. According to Boardable a board

management resource company that specifically helps support not-for-profit organizations, it defines an executive committee as a steering committee to the full board, or the NEC in our case, and is composed of elected board officers.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion? Are you ready for the question?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: We are voting on the amendment. The amendment to the amendment. Sorry. Disregard. The amendment to the amendment requires a majority to pass. We will vote by voice. All those in favor of adopting the amendment to strike, "appointed annually by the national president" and insert "elected annually by the National Executive Committee persons in their respective divisions". Please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed

please signify by saying no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: The ayes have it and the amendment has been adopted. The question is now on the amendment as presented, as amended. Sorry. My bad. Is there any further discussion?

MS. JEFFORD: Madam President.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. JEFFORD: Janet Jefford, Department of Connecticut. I also have an amendment to propose. I've turned it in to the committee. And it's on the composition of the executive committee. Where -- and that amendment is to strike "one past national president, named by the executive director annually", and insert "one past national president from the finance committee appointed by the president". I think you have it up there.

PRESIDENT WARD: This requires a second. Stand by while we get it on the screen. OK. We have another amendment to strike "one

Past National President named by the executive director annually", and insert "one Past National President from the national Finance Committee appointed by the national president". Is there any further discussion?

MS. JEFFORD: Madam President, as a proposing the amendment. I wish to speak.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. JEFFORD: I proposed this amendment for two reasons. One, I heard the concern of many about having a paid employee choose a member of the executive committee. So therefore I am recommending we delete that.

And also there has been some concern that there should be a member of the Finance Committee on the Executive Committee. Since many financial implications -- decisions are made with that have financial implications. And having someone on the Finance Committee there would ensure that these financial considerations are listened to at the executive committee level.

Therefore, I stand in favor of the -- this amendment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Does anyone wish to speak in opposition to the amendment?

MS. DRAKE: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. DRAKE: Marti Drake from the Department of Indiana. I disagree with the amendment to the amendment she just made. I think the executive director should be able to choose whoever she wants. If you're limiting it to only somebody on the Finance Committee, that's not really fair to the executive director. He or she should be able to choose whoever she'd like as the Past National President.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

MS. MACINNES: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. MACINNES: Cathleen MacInnes,
Department of New York. Just a question. This
amendment implies that only Past National
Presidents may serve on the Finance Committee. I
do not believe that is what our governing
documents say. So if there were no Past National
Presidents on the Finance Committee, would that
mean that the president would have no appointment
on this board?

PRESIDENT WARD: The governing
documents indicate there must be at least one
Past National President on Finance.

MS. MACINNES: Thank you, Madam
President.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for the
comments. Is there any further discussion?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mic 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Chair recognizes
the delegate at microphone 3.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I speak in favor
of Past National Presidents, Janet's motion. I'd
like to give a piece of history. Years ago -- I

know, oh know is right. I've got the mic. A piece of history. Well, I'm sorry I'm being rudely interrupted over here, and I'm not going to stand for it. I'm a delegate, just like everybody else.

PRESIDENT WARD: Decorum. Decorum in the convention, please.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. The part of the history where all of this in the very beginning of this National Executive Committee to the National Executive Committee. The reason we had originally appointed the national secretary and the national treasurer were because at the time, we did not have a national executive director and a national finance officer. We now do. I actually believe that Madam Janet is correct.

We need somebody on there that understands the day-to-day operations of how our organization works. If we don't have somebody like the national secretary, and/or the executive director that's allowed to go to those meetings

with a voice with no vote, which was the way it was intended originally, then we lose that voice of day-to-day operations about timely manner decisions.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion on the amendment?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Therefore, we will vote. You know, the voting keypads have got me really rattled. So we are now going to vote on the amendment. We're going to strike "one Past National President named by the executive director annually", and insert "one Past National President from the national Finance Committee appointed by the national president". All those in favor of adopting the amendment, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please signify by saying no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: This requires a

majority to pass, and the amendment has passed. We will now vote on the amendment as amended. Is there any further discussion?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Right now we -- our national secretary sits on that Executive Committee. And I believe that Saturday, National Secretary Boone said she was tasked with minutes and distribution for executive sessions as well as Executive Committee meetings.

And if we don't keep our national secretary on there as we just passed, I think it amendments 6 and 11, that also directs her to be the point of contact between the National Executive Committee and status of disciplinary action, things like that.

I believe that we need to have the national secretary on the Executive Committee to the NEC. So I'll make that motion.

PRESIDENT WARD: I heard a second,

right?

AUDIENCE: Second.

PRESIDENT WARD: We have an amendment form. Thank you for your patience. We need to get it on the screen so we know exactly where it needs to be inserted and you can see it clearly, right? It's worth an extra minute, so hang in there.

Could the delegate from Alaska please repeat your motion?

MS. WILLIAMSON: As you can tell, I only had the one form, and other people have taken care of a lot of the -- my concerns. That we add the national secretary to the Executive Committee to the NEC.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for the clarification. Question for the delegate from Alaska. Is there a particular place in the paragraph that you would like it inserted?

MS. WILLIAMSON: Probably after vice president.

PRESIDENT WARD: OK.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Right?

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. There's been an amendment. Delegate from Alaska, amendment is in red.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Looks good.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. The amendment is to add national secretary to the components of the Executive Committee to the NEC. It has been seconded. Is there any further discussion?

MS. BARYLSKI: Madam President, Rita Barylski, Department of Connecticut. My question is this, isn't the duty of the national secretary to be at all the meetings to take minutes, so she's automatically there? To that -- what do you mean no? Well, isn't that part of her job to take minutes?

PRESIDENT WARD: The Executive Committee to the NEC is specifically prescribed by certain entities in this amendment -- in the governing documents. So an alternative could be that the chair of the Executive Committee to the

NEC could appoint a member of that committee to take minutes. So that is an option. There are -- there is other options as well. So thank you for your comments.

MS. BARYLSKI: Thank you.

MS. HAAS: Microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. HAAS: Jeanne Haas, delegate from the Department of Kansas. A clarifying question for the delegate from Alaska. Would this be a voice but no vote or a member -- a voting member, please?

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. WILLIAMSON: I didn't want to speak out of turn. Thank you, Madam President. No, I did not stipulate voice without vote. It would be a full member of the Executive Committee.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion regarding this amendment?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hearing none, we will vote. It requires a majority to pass. All those in favor of adopting the amendment to insert national secretary, please stand. Thank you. Please be seated. All those opposed, please stand. Thank you. The ayes have it, and the amendment has been adopted. We will now vote on the amendment as amended. Is there any further discussion? The --

MS. CONATSER: Madam President,
microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. CONATSER: Sharon Conatser, Department of Illinois. I still have a concern -- and this is just out there, but we have two nonvoting members on the large NEC still sitting on this committee with votes. And to me, I just wanted to voice that. That's a real concern for me.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

MS. SINCLAIR: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. SINCLAIR: April Sinclair, Department of Alaska. Just for clarifying questions, and also, maybe for the other delegates in the room, can you please clarify the number that is on this executive committee, and who has the voting voice and who doesn't?

PRESIDENT WARD: In its current capacity or if adopted?

MS. SINCLAIR: If adopted.

PRESIDENT WARD: President, vice president, five members from each division of the NEC by an appointment process by their NECs.

MS. SINCLAIR: Is that 10?

PRESIDENT WARD: Going from memory. Sorry.

MS. SINCLAIR: 10 or 11?

PRESIDENT WARD: There's 10. There's 10.

MS. SINCLAIR: So should it not be an

odd number? Clarification for myself.

PRESIDENT WARD: According to national registered parliamentarian, not necessary to be an odd number.

MS. SINCLAIR: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: And they are currently all voting members. Is there any further discussion?

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hearing none, we will vote on the amendment as amended. All those in favor of adopting the amendment number 14, as amended, please stand. All those opposed -- please sit down. All those opposed, please stand. Thank you. We have -- we -- this requires a two-thirds vote. The vote to adopt is in the affirmative. The ayes have it. The amendment is adopted, and the governing documents are amended. Thank you to all for the spirited discussion.

Would Constitution & Bylaws Committee Chair Norma Tramm please present the final

amendment for consideration?

(Applause)

MS. TRAMM: Madam National President, proposed amendment 15 seeks to change terms composition and require the committee to be appointed each administrative year. The amendment was proposed by Pam Ray, national vice president; Dr. Coral Grout, national VA&R chair; Dr. Lisa Chaplin, national Children & Youth chair; Linda Boone, national secretary.

If adopted, the section will read as follows. "Seven committees, special purpose long range strategic planning. The national president must appoint a Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee, subject to ratification by the National Executive Committee. The national Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee shall be comprised of five members serving staggered five-year terms.

"One member shall be appointed each year by the national president to serve a five-year term, and may serve a maximum of two five-

year terms consecutively. No appointee having served two terms on the committee shall be eligible for reappointment. The chairman shall be appointed annually and serve as one of the five members.

"The executive director and a past national president serving on the National Finance Committee shall be additional members of the said committee with voice but without vote. The national Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee shall meet no less than quarterly at the call of national president.

"The national vice president, national Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation chairman, and national Children & Youth chairman may attend as guests for the purpose of observing, to gain knowledge of planning strategically for the organization's future.

"The purpose of the national Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee is to assist the National Executive Committee with the responsibilities for the organization's mission,

vision, and strategic direction.

"Long-Range Strategic Planning

Committee shall: develop an effective" strategy -- "strategic planning process and three-to-five-year strategic plan with measurable goals and time targets; provide oversight of the implementation of the adopted strategic plan; monitoring the organization's performance against key performance indicators established in the adopted strategic plan; make recommendations for adjustments to the adopted strategic plan based on" progress -- "progress of the plan, ALA resources, and current trends in the veteran community and nonprofit sector; provide status reports to the NEC at each regular meeting."

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-

Convention Committee recommends the amendment be adopted. Madam National President, on behalf of the Constitution & Bylaws Committee, I move the adoption of the final proposed Amendment 15 as distributed in the amendment packet.

PRESIDENT WARD: The question is on the

adoption of proposed amendment 15 as distributed.

The Constitution & Bylaws Pre-Convention

Committee recommends the amendment be adopted.

Is there any discussion?

MS. GROUT: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: Chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. GROUT: Madam President, Coral May Grout, Department of Massachusetts. I speak in favor of this proposal. It is not costly. There will be one meeting in person per year for five people. All other meetings will be by Zoom. There will not be purchases of T-shirts, balloons, consultants, call-ins of hundreds of people, or anything else like the last time. We have qualified members right within our ranks.

The committee will be revolving just as the Finance Committee is. There will be an application process to ensure that experienced strategic planners are selected.

We had lofty goals that went nowhere, and nothing has been done since 2020 to plan for

our future. Take a look at successful businesses and nonprofits. They all plan three to five years down the road. I'll name just a few well-known groups that have this process in place. The VFW Auxiliary, The American Legion, Microsoft, Apple, your grocery store chains, school districts, cities, and towns.

All plans include short- and long-term goals, an ongoing evaluation process, and ways to tweak goals that are not being met. Delegates, please know that if we do not plan ahead for our future, there eventually will be no future. Floundering organizations die. Thank you for listening. I ask you to support this.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comments.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there any further discussion?

MS. JOHNSON: Microphone 3. Shareen Johnson, Department of Wyoming. I have a clarifying question.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. JOHNSON: It mentions here one member shall be appointed each year by the national president, et cetera. if you go down further, it says, the chairman shall be appointed annually. The way I read that the person appointed by the national president would be the chairman, and to me that would be inappropriate, because they would be serving on there for their first year, and would not have the knowledge that they need to serve as chairman. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comment. Is there any further discussion?

MS. CHAPLIN: Microphone 4.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone four.

MS. CHAPLIN: Thank you. Lisa Chaplin, Department of Virginia. I speak in favor of the proposal to establish a Long-Range Strategic Planning Committee. All successful entities, whether they be businesses, large or small,

education or health care institutions, or even other nonprofits, have a strategic plan with both long and short-term goals and a blueprint for reaching those goals.

They also include evaluation processes in order to measure progress at specific time points, and to assess whether revisions to strategies may be necessary in order to successfully reach those established goals. This would require consideration of changes in allocation of available resources, as well as any external factors and opportunities that may impact that.

These functions can't be done without a designated committee to do so. We've already heard that the cost of establishing a committee is negligible, but also consider that the cost of not establishing the committee to develop a strategic plan can and will be very costly. It may cost the sustainability of our beloved organization.

We all hope to be around for another

hundred years, but hope is not a plan. It's difficult to achieve any objective without a roadmap, a well-defined plan, some sort of a compass to guide us to survive as an organization. We must be proactive. We have to take responsibility for our own future. We can't wait for it to magically unfold. In order to plan for our future, we need this committee. Failure to plan is, in essence, a plan to fail. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

MS. FICKLIN: Microphone 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. FICKLIN: Rose Ficklin, Department of Arizona. Honestly, when I read this, I was firmly against it because I remember the hoops the departments and the units had to jump through for the Centennial Strategic Plan. If this stays basically on the national level, and kind of as a guide, I have no heartburn with it, but with the

Merit Medallion -- and then if we have to jump through hoops with a strategic plan on the department and unit level, I'm going to disagree with it, because honestly, our grassroots members only want to work the mission, and want to let the national organization guide it, and leave the hoops on just the Merit Medallion, please.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your comments.

MS. CARLTON: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. CARLTON: Fran Carlton from the Department of Florida. I just have a question regarding the delegate that got up and said there would be one in-person meeting and three Zoom meetings. I don't see that anywhere in here. It looks to me like there'll be four meetings by the national president. Am I missing it? Says it would be -- she said the committee would be revolving, which it is if it's these people.

PRESIDENT WARD: In the rationale, it

speaks to the annual meeting in the rationale for the amendment.

MS. CARLTON: OK. That's the rationale, but it is not actually in the amendment that there'll be one in-person, and the rest will be Zoom, correct?

PRESIDENT WARD: It is not in the amendment, correct?

MS. CARLTON: OK. That concerns me.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there any further discussion?

MS. BRITTON: Madam President, microphone number 2.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. BRITTON: Susan Britton, Department of New York. Just a clarifying question. Since a new committee of five needs to be appointed to start this up, right, correct?

PRESIDENT WARD: Correct.

MS. BRITTON: So does that mean that the incoming new national president will appoint

all five members new?

PRESIDENT WARD: That would be correct.

MS. BRITTON: OK. Well, right. It says staggering, but we need a --

PRESIDENT WARD: But you got to start, right.

MS. BRITTON: OK. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Yep. Is there any --

MS. DUPONT: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. DUPONT: Linda Dupont, Department of New Hampshire. I'd like to move the question.

PRESIDENT WARD: Requires a second.

AUDIENCE: Second.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those in favor of closing debate, please say aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

(No audible response)

PRESIDENT WARD: The ayes have it and

debate is closed. We will vote on the amendment. All those in favor of amendment 15, please stand. Thank you. Please sit. All those opposed, please stand. Thank you. Please sit. This requires a two-thirds vote to pass. The ayes have it. The vote is in the affirmative and the amendment is adopted. The governing documents are amended.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I would invite Norma back to the podium if she's willing to come.

(Laughter)

MS. TRAMM: Do I have to finish? I have one more sentence, right? Oh, yes. Madam President, this concludes my report. Thank you to all the delegates for your participation and your vote.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Norma, and thank you, delegates. It was great, wasn't it? I think so. Absolutely. Yes, it was epic. Would the national secretary please give us the

convention update?

MS. BOONE: OK. States Dinner tickets going, going. Maryland has two. Kansas has one. And who was else? Idaho has one -- two. Sorry. So if you want to go to the states dinner, you decide you want to come be part of the epic celebration, you can get that. And then right after we close here, the installation practice will occur. So that includes all the incoming and outgoing officers. Anybody else that's part of the installation, like installing officers, those kinds of things, and the incoming department presidents. OK? All right. Stay here for a little bit. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: This meeting is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 8:30, when I will see you back in this room. Thank you.

(Applause)

(Music played)

(Whereupon, the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention was adjourned).



2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY

104TH ALA NATIONAL CONVENTION

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2025

2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION

8:30 A.M. - 12:12 P.M.

Tampa Convention Center

Central Hall

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P R O C E E D I N G S

AUTOMATED GREETING: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to day three of the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention. Here to begin your final session is your national president, Trish Ward.

(Applause)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: I remember my first national convention. It was Carol Van Kirk's. And I remember sitting out there where you all were, and looking up at this head stage and saying, no one's smiling up there. What's going on? So I want to remember -- you're going to see a lot of people smiling. We have this whole week, even yesterday. And so it was amazing. I want to thank you all for your grace and dignity. I -- I'll never forget it. You -- you all were awesome. We got business done, and we're going to do more of that today.

So good morning, American Legion Auxiliary. It's nominations and elections day.

It's a very exciting day. So -- so -- so exciting for the Departments of Illinois and Massachusetts and -- and all of our candidates. So we're going to be here for them.

So let's get started. I call this meeting to order.

But first we have a few announcements. Sorry. The American Legion has invited members who would like to join their session to hear Secretary of the VA and Director of National Security. You would need to be in their session by 10:00 a.m. Which would mean, you know, you would need to depart this session by, safely, you know, 9:45. And you would be there for one hour, about 11:00.

And they would love to have you join them. And that's fine with us. So if you would like to do that, please feel free to do that. I have just a quick ask. Is there two members in this audience where it's their first national convention? First two hands I see, I have for you the American Legion Auxiliary Challenge card

decks and my National Challenge Coin. So I'm going to give this to my pages for you to please come forward at recess and -- and get them, for you, from me.

My last announcement is this: Today, Trish Ward's garage sale officially starts.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: I have in my hand the traveling scale that I used this entire year. The diet is over as of today.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: If anyone would like it, it is free or I'm putting it in the trash.

Thank you so much. And then I'll have a few more comments later about those lovely voting keypads.

Monique, would you please lead us in our invocation? National Chaplain Monique Batiste to the podium.

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: Dear God, thank you for this amazing week of celebrating Leading the Way,

and being a beacon of light so others will see the good in us and want to follow.

Bless us in all our comings and goings today. Keep our minds and our hearts good as we work for our veterans and the American Legion Auxiliary. Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

PRESIDENT WARD: Please be seated.

Thank you, Monique.

And thank you to our past national presidents for arriving early this morning to greet our attendees.

One moment please.

The first item of business is the nomination of national officers for the 2025-2026 administrative year. Representatives making the nominations, as well as the candidates, are seated on the stage. Linda Boone, National Secretary, will read the rules governing nominations and elections.

Linda.

MS. BOONE: The rules, Number 22:

Nomination of national officers shall be made from the floor.

23: Nominating speeches shall be limited to two minutes for each candidate, except the national president candidate. She will be allowed four minutes. There be -- shall be no seconding speeches.

Number 24: Following nominating speeches for national officers, each nominee for national president, national vice president, national chaplain, national historian shall be introduced to the assembly by the Auxiliary member making her nomination. Said introduction to be only by name and department affiliation. And in response to the introduction, the nominee for office shall be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Number 24: Election of national officers shall be held on Wednesday, when there is but one candidate for any office, the nominee may be elected by voice. When there is more than one candidate for national office, the election

shall be by paper or electronic ballot, as determined by the presiding officer. A majority of votes cast shall elect each officer. When no candidate receives a majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot will be taken between the candidates receiving the two highest numbers of votes, with the candidate receiving the most votes on the second ballot being elected.

Madam National President, that concludes the reading of the nomination and election rules.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Linda.

Nominations are now in order for the office of national president. The national secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. BOONE: The Department of Illinois has an announced candidate for the office of national president. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. HOLTGRAVE: I am Arlene Holtgrave from the Department of Illinois. Please recognize the delegate from the Department of Illinois for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from the Department of Illinois for the purpose of nomination.

MS. CONATSER: Madam President Trish, I'm past national president, Sharon Conatser and a delegate from the Department of Illinois. Our father, Clayborn Lofton, was a veteran of World War II and Korea.

Through his service to our country, Pam was signed up as an American Legion Auxiliary member at birth and has been a proud continuous member for 69 years and is a paid up for life member. She continues to honor his service every day.

Pam's entire family has been active in The American Legion family. Our father went on

to serve as the Department of Illinois commander. Our mother, Irene, served as department president and national Central Division vice president. I have served as national president and her brother-in-law, Marty Conatser, a Past National Commander.

Pam's husband, Butch, has also served in many roles as a member of the Sons of The American Legion, including past national chaplain. He just recently finished his year as national regional vice commander with the SAL and did a fabulous job.

Pam served as honorary department junior president for the Department of Illinois, in 1972. She went on to serve her unit, district, department as president and was a Power of One department president, serving with Past National President Carlene Ashworth.

Pam has served our national organization in the following ways: As NEC, a member of the national ALA Girls State Committee and Strategic Planning; vice chairman for Public

Relations, Junior Activities and Americanism committees; and chairman for ALA Girls Nation, Junior Activities twice; National Security membership, twice -- thank you, COVID --

(Laughter)

MS. CONATSER: -- Constitution & Bylaws; Children & Youth; and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation. She's currently serving as your national vice president.

Pam's love has always been helping young people. She helped 42 young people become nurses, where \$42,000 was raised -- raised, when she served as chairman in 2011 and 2012, in Illinois.

And of course, our ALA Girls State and Girls Nation programs: She served as Girls Nation several times, and for more than 25 years, she served ALA Girls State.

As I stand before you today, I reflect on the lifetime of a candidate. As a child, my little sister loved funny looking dolls such as Mrs. Dezzy and Lulu.

(Laughter)

MS. CONATSER: As a teenager, she enjoyed marching in the maroon band color guard. As a wife, she supports Butch in all of his endeavors. As a mom, her daughters, Sarah and Amy, were raised to be independent, successful young women. And they are both beautiful inside and out, just like their mom.

As an aunt, she loves my boys like they're her own, and she's always proud of their accomplishments as well as her own daughters. As a Nana, well, that's a whole 'nother story, as those of us that have grandchildren know. She travels to Kentucky to support their participation in ballgames, plays, and just getting together. Pam is a fierce friend to her neighborhood, her ALA friends, and work friends.

F is for forever. R is for real. I is for involved. E is for endearing. N is for nice, and D is for devoted. That is the kind of friend Pam is. At a nurse, she would sit with her patients on her own time just to hold their

hand or give a little caring to the family.

All these qualities will make Pam an outstanding national president for our ALA. Love for the organization is fierce with Pam and our family. And she continues that love for the ALA every day.

She's a daughter whose mom and dad were so proud of her successes in life. And they are so proud today, watching this unfold. For the first time in history, our organization, we will have sisters as national presidents who have had the honor of sharing this title.

Our candidate is an amazing daughter, sister, wife, mother, Nana, and most important friend. She'll be an incredible national president for our organization and our members. At the end of the wonderful journey, when you're out of office, please return to Illinois.

We will all be there to welcome you with open arms. We love you.

Madam President, it's a very proud sister moment, and a member of Urbana Unit 71,

that I am honored to nominate Pam Ray, a great leader and my little sister, for the office of national president for 2025-2026.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Pam Ray is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national president? Hearing none, nominations for national president are closed.

Nominations are in order for the office of national vice president. The national secretary will call departments with announced candidates.

MS. BOONE: The Department of Massachusetts has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of a nomination.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. BLATTENBERGER: I am the delegation leader for the Department of Massachusetts, Donna Blattenberger. Madam President, please recognize

the delegate from the Department of Massachusetts for the purpose of the nomination. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Massachusetts for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. FOURNIER: I am Ann Fournier from the Department of Massachusetts. Madam President, delegates, and friends, in 1953, World War II veteran, who served in the Coral Seas along with a wife, it was Charles and Rachel Grout, gave the Eugene M. Connor Unit 193, of Winchendon, Massachusetts, a new junior member.

This member would attend Auxiliary meetings and functions in a laundry basket.

(Laughter)

MS. FOURNIER: As she grew out of that laundry basket, she would help her parents and grandparents in poppy drives and in many of the American Legion family functions in Winchendon. Coral has served in all of the various offices within her unit and chaired numerous programs with a particular focus on education.

As she matured, she would hold all of the offices of her district of Worcester County, Massachusetts. Again, as she grew older, she would do the same in the Department of Massachusetts. She would return for a second term as department president during the COVID years.

She chaired multiple national programs. She was also your national historian and secretary. And as a chairman, as an education chairman, she introduced the program called Give Ten for Education.

She's most recently chaired the Children and Youth in Veterans Affairs and rehabilitation programs. She is also a member of the American Legion Foundation, the Auxiliary Foundation. Dr. Coral May Grout is a retired superintendent of schools and is on the board of directors for Catholic Financial Life.

It is my pleasure, and I am so pleased to do this to another person from 1953.

(Laughter)

MS. FOURNIER: Dr. Coral May Grout, for national president (sic) of the American Legion Auxiliary.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Dr. Coral May Grout is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national vice president? Hearing none, nominations for national vice president are closed.

Nominations are now in order for the office of national chaplain. The national secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. BOONE: The Department of Indiana has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for the purpose of nomination.

MS. STONER: Roxy Stoner, the Department of Indiana.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. STONER: Roxy Stoner, Department of

Indiana. I ask the chair to recognize the delegate from the Department of Indiana for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. The chair recognizes the delegate from Indiana for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. KOUTZ: Madam President Trish, good morning everyone. I am Vickie Koutz, Past National President and a delegate from the Department of Indiana. I'm here to nominate Nancy Magginnis for American Legion Auxiliary national chaplain.

Nancy's eligibility is through her father, Marv Lidey, Jr. (phonetic), a World War II Army veteran. Nancy's family has been active members at Post 86 in Kendallville for many years.

As a young girl, Nancy was active in the junior program, creating poppy posters, distribute -- distributing poppies, visiting local veterans, and helping with bingo parties at the local VA hospital.

She is a former Indiana Department honorary junior president and ALA Hoosier Girl state delegate. She volunteered many years on the ALA/HGS staff, serving on the board of directors, and is also a past ALA Hoosier Girl State director.

After college, she actively worked on the unit, district, and department levels. She became the Department of Indiana president in 2003-2004, leading members with creating precious moments one heart at a time.

Nancy's dedication didn't end there. She served as the ALA Girls state national chairman, directing ALA Girls Nation, national Leadership chairman, and this year serving as the national Education vice chairman.

She retired from Northeast Indiana Works, where she managed employment offices serving veterans. In 2022, under Nancy's leadership, the Auburn Indiana Work One office was named as The American Legion National Employment Local Office.

In 2010, Nancy married the love of her life, Ira. Ira is an active SAL member of Squadron 97. Together, they serve at Saint John's Lutheran Church, where they lead music for contemporary services. She enjoys singing while Ira plays guitar. Praising God through these opportunities is her way of thanking God for saving her life when she was three years old.

Indiana members and I support and believe Nancy would make an exceptional American Legion Auxiliary national chaplain. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Nancy Magginnis is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national chaplain? Hearing none, nominations for national chaplain are closed.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Nominations are in order for the office of national historian. The national secretary will call the departments with announced candidates.

MS. BOONE: The Department of Alaska has announced -- an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for a purpose of introduction.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Alaska for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. FRUHWIRTH: Lori Fruhwirth, delegation chairman from the Department of Alaska. I request that you recognize the delegate from Alaska, that is on stage, for the purpose of nomination.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Alaska for the purpose of nomination.

MS. WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Madam President. Thank you. It was -- it is with great pride, full confidence, and a heartfelt admiration that I rise today to nominate my friend, a dedicated leader, and someone I deeply respect, Hilary Ott for the office of national

historian of the American Legion Auxiliary.

I've had the privilege of working alongside Hilary for several years during my time as national president, and before that, through her work as a visual media specialist for the American Legion National Headquarters.

From the very beginning, she stood out, not only for her creativity and professionalism, but for the unmistakable heart behind everything she does. I still remember the moment when Hilary shared a story with me about her grandfather, who served in World War II. It was a point of pride for her growing up, a connection that shaped her view of service and sacrifice.

But more recently, she discovered something she hadn't known. Her grandfather also served in Korea. That realization deepened her understanding and her sense of purpose. She told me about it not as a fact, but as something that she felt, and it was clear to me in that moment just how deeply rooted her commitment to veterans truly was. That was when I saw her passion, not

just as a professional or a storyteller, but as someone who genuinely lives the values we hold dear in this organization.

And so I invited her to become a member of my unit. Since then, Hilary has continued to lead by example, serving with distinction, compassion, and vision. Through her storytelling, she has preserved our legacy. Through her leadership, she has elevated our mission. And through her character, she has earned the trust and respect of members through the entire American Legion family.

She currently serves as the director of the Indiana American Legion Foundation, where she works every day to support youth leaders in training, veterans in crisis, and families seeking stability. Whether she's sitting down to listen to a veteran's story, working at a community event, or building relationships with partners and volunteers, Hilary brings the same unwavering dedication, care, and sense of service to everything she does.

Our national -- as our national historian, she will not only preserve our past, she will help ensure it lives through our meaningful stories, accessible archives, and creative engagement that speaks to members across generations.

Hilary Ott just doesn't do the work, she pours her heart into it and makes it matter. She doesn't just tell stories, she tells our story.

And I can think of no one more qualified, more committed, or more aligned with the spirit and responsibility of this role. It is my honor and privilege, on behalf of the Department of Alaska, to nominate my dear friend, Hilary Ott, for the office of national historian of the American Legion Auxiliary for the year 2025-2026. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Hilary Ott is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national historian?

MS. BOONE: The Department of Illinois

has an announced candidate. The delegation chairman should ask the chair to recognize the delegate for the purposes of nomination.

MS. HOLTGRAVE: I am Arlene Holtgrave, from the Department of Illinois.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. HOLTGRAVE: I am Arlene Holtgrave, from the Department in Illinois. Please recognize the delegate from the Department of Illinois for the nomination purpose.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate from Illinois for the purpose of making a nomination.

MS. STETINA: Madam President, guests, and delegates, my name is Karen Stetina, and I am a delegate of Illinois.

This year, I proudly introduce Angela Walker as the dynamic and deeply committed candidate for national historian of the American Legion Auxiliary. Endorsed by the Department of Illinois, Angela is -- has been a dual member of

The American Legion North Shore Post 738 and Highland Park Auxiliary Unit 145, for eight years.

She has served as a co-Music chairman. She's a proud United States Navy veteran. Her dedication to service extends far beyond her uniform. Angela has spent decades honoring, supporting, and uplifting our veterans through her work in the community service and Veterans Affairs.

Whether through her years of award-winning singing programs, that bring healing and hope to the hospitalized veterans, or her tireless work as a veterans service officer, Angela has become a beacon of compassion and leadership. Her accomplishments are far reaching.

She holds a master's degree in education. In 2025, she was named one of the Illinois Women Veteran Leaders by the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. She also served as an overall participant award in both the VA&R

and music program from the Department of Illinois. Angela's influence spans across the globe.

This year, she represented the Rotary International Singapore as a facilitator and speaker on disability and inclusion, continuing her impactful work as a motivational speaker, community navigator, and an advocate for veterans.

She serves on the executive board of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, Wisconsin chapter, plays a vital role in membership recruitment, and a national voice in the PAA/PVA Anita Blum -- sorry woman -- a decorated competitor, Angela has earned over 10 gold medals as a Veterans National Creative Arts Festival and more than 100 medals as a veteran athlete.

As her candidate for national historian, Angela is deeply committed and preserving the stories and legacies of our organization. Her goal is to increase public

awareness of the American Legion Auxiliary by continuing to preserve the national image.

Please join me in supporting Angela Walker, candidate for the national historian, a woman of service, soul, and unwavering purpose. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Angela M. Walker is nominated. Are there any further nominations for the office of national historian? Hearing none, nominations for national historian are closed.

With these nominations, and the nominations made during the division caucuses on Saturday, August 23rd, 2025, nominations for the 2025-2026 national officers are complete.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The convention rules provide that the nominees for the offices of national president, national vice president, national chaplain, and national historian shall be introduced to the assembly.

The Auxiliary member who made the nomination will introduce the candidate by name and department affiliation only. Each nominee will be allowed a maximum of two minutes for remarks.

Will the representative from Illinois please introduce the candidate for national president?

MS. CONATSER: Candidate for national president for '25-'26, Pam Ray, Department of Illinois.

MS. RAY: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. RAY: I want to thank Sharon for the nomination. I loved it. I always love hearing about my parents. I always do.

I didn't know she was going to tell you the story about the ugly dolls. Did not know that.

(Laughter)

MS. RAY: But since Trish and I love stories, I will tell you that Dad, for one year,

could not find the ugly doll I wanted anywhere. So he had his sister, in Wichita Falls, Texas, buy the doll, put it on a bus, and transport it to Champaign, Illinois. But I got my ugly doll.

What a difference 10 years makes. Ten years ago, I was not receiving Social Security. But I am today. And literally today is payday, so there we go.

(Laughter)

MS. RAY: Ten years ago, my grandkids were babies, but not today. And 10 years ago, today, I stood on the stage in Baltimore, showed baby pictures of my big sister, and nominated her for the national president of the American Legion Auxiliary. And here we are today. Ten years ago, I never dreamed that I would be in this position. But thanks to wonderful friends, family, and mentors, here I am. I'm here because of all of you, and because of the hard work and dedication I have given to the American Legion Auxiliary family.

The American Legion Family has been

part of my life for my entire life. My dad fought in two wars to secure the freedoms we all have today. I want to see this organization grow and thrive.

My mom was a hugger. She hugged everyone and she loved receiving hugs; just ask her grandkids. I've inherited that love of hugging. My hope is that I will lead this organization with kindness and caring, as she would have done, giving the organization a big hug. I will always put the organization first, not ego, not agenda. I will do what is right for the many, not the few. And most importantly, I will put our veterans and active military and their families first, providing them with the respect, honor, and services they need and deserve.

Thank you, American Legion Family of Illinois, for this wonderful opportunity.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Will the representative from Massachusetts present the

candidate for national vice president?

MS. BLATTENBERGER: I'd like to present to you the delegate for national vice president, Dr. Coral May Grout.

DR. GROUT: Good morning, delegates.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

DR. GROUT: Thank you so much for joining me on this journey, as we've climbed through the chairs, thanks to my first appointment as Children & Youth chair by Past National President Lisa Williamson, to the point where you're nominating me today for your vice president. That is vice president, not president.

(Laughter)

DR. GROUT: And I am so looking forward to spending the next year working on your behalf, with our wonderful national president, Pam Ray. I promise each and every one of you -- many of you know me very well, over the years. I've been around since the turn of the century, literally.

(Laughter)

DR. GROUT: But you know that I will represent you with dignity and respect for those we serve. I will work with you to achieve the goals and needs of our wonderful organization. And that means we need to work together. We can't be jealous. We can't be disrespectful. And we always need to be honest.

My commitment to you this morning will be to continue giving 110 percent to serving our veterans, our military, of course, our children, and our communities where we are so highly respected. Let us not lose that respect.

And I look forward to meeting you throughout the year, and listening to you, and continuing to work with our wonderful incoming national president. Thank you for this opportunity.

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations, Coral.

DR. GROUT: Thank you, Trish. I love you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Love you more.

Will the representative from Indiana please present the candidate for national chaplain?

MS. KOUTZ: I present to you Nancy Magginnis, from the Department of Indiana, for national chaplain 2025-2026.

MS. MAGGINNIS: Thank you, Past National President Vickie, for the nomination. National President Trish, national officers, and ALA members, I stand before you today as a woman of God, who seeks to be your national chaplain.

I could stand and recite my past accomplishments. However, I think you would rather hear what I plan to do, if elected. I am an active member at my church back in Kendallville. My husband and I serve God as worship leaders in contemporary services to praise God. There are many songs allowing people to worship God for who he is and what he's done.

If elected, I would like to utilize these powerful songs to share with you who God is. In our lives, there are times of joy and

times where we need God to pour out his love and mercy on us. It is my hope that God will help me to provide inspiration to you, as you work the ALA programs, touching the lives of our veterans through service, not self.

I would like to share a poem with you by an unknown author: "Just think. You're here not by chance, but by God's choosing. His hand formed you and made you the person you are. He compares you to no one else. You are one of a kind. You lack nothing that his grace can't give you. He has allowed you to be here at this time in history to fulfill his special purpose for this generation."

Again, it's not about Nancy Magginnis. It's about what God -- or about who God is. It's not about what Nancy Magginnis has done. It's about what God has done and continues to do in our lives.

I, like you, am a child of God. God has a plan for each of our lives, and he calls us to share his love and forgiveness with all

people. If I may be an instrument to assist you in your walk with him, then I will have done my job, if elected as your national chaplain.

May God bless you, your family, our military, our veterans, and America. And all of God's people said Amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations again.

MS. MAGGINNIS: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Will the representative from Alaska present the candidate for national historian.

MS. WILLIAMSON: On behalf of the great State of Alaska, I present to you Hilary Ott, candidate for the office of national historian.

MS. OTT: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. OTT: As you all know, I've always had a passion for collecting stories and honoring the people that they belong to. Many of you know me from my visual work through the Legion family, and I've been around here for a little while.

But my love for preserving history began long before I ever picked up a camera, as Lisa stated.

I'm eligible for membership through my paternal grandfather, Donald Ray Anderson. And just a few years ago, I found out -- I've known my entire life he was a World War II veteran and has always meant something to me. And he died -- he passed away when I was a small child. I only found out just a few years ago, after searching for his DD214, that he also served in Korea, very in depth in Korea, and I absolutely never knew.

And that discovery connected me in ways I never expected. It shaped my passion for both storytelling and mental health advocacy. His story is one of the reasons I believe so deeply in preserving the legacy of -- of others, because our history connects us across generations.

One of those stories came from Navy Seabee Kansas Legionnaire David Warnken. Six months after I produced the series detailing his service in Vietnam and how he remembers his fallen comrades, Dave traveled to Indianapolis

for fall meetings. He made a point to stop by my office at national headquarters. With eyes -- emotion in his eyes, he said, because of that story, I received the welcome home I was never given 50 years ago when I came home from Vietnam.

He went on to tell me how all these years later, his service and sacrifice were being recognized. Neighbors in a small town, where he lived his entire life, approached him with gratitude and heartfelt appreciation. He'd reconnected with battle buddies he hadn't heard from and lost touch with over 50 years ago.

He also went on to share how our Legion family wrapped around him and shared with him that they weren't alone, many of them sharing stories of their own. And he told me, I didn't know how much I needed to talk and tell my story, but I'm really glad I did. When I think about that interaction with Dave, it still gives me goosebumps, and it truly defined my why.

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my unit, C. Russell Huber Unit 57,

and to the entire Department of Alaska. A special thank you goes to my mentor, my friend, one of my G.O.A.Ts, Past National President Lisa Williamson, for inviting me to her unit and giving me the honor of calling my Alaska my home department.

From day one, you all have provided me with so much love. I also want to give an honorable mention to the Department of Indiana.

(Applause)

MS. OTT: Thank you for bringing -- accompanying me to Tampa. I'm truly humbled to be standing here today. To all of you, thank you so much for your encouragement, friendship, and belief of me. As your national historian, I'll always share our history, preserve the dignity, detail, and heart it deserves. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

Will the representative from Illinois present the candidate for national historian?

MS. STETINA: On behalf of the State of Illinois, I introduce Angela Walker, candidate

for historian.

MS. WALKER: Thank you.

Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. WALKER: I'm so happy to be here.

I'm a proud dual member of the American Legion family, and I'm a United States Navy veteran.

(Applause)

MS. WALKER: And I'd like to give you a little bit of history. In 1987, I left the U.S. military. But in 1992, I was diagnosed with PTSD and I had to go to the hospital. And it was there that I had my first experience with the American Legion Auxiliary.

The precious moments that were shared with me, from the women that helped me when I could not help myself, I will never forget the faces of the women who were American Legion Auxiliary members. And at a time in my life when everything seemed wrong, when nothing -- nothing was right, it was the smiles and the kindness of the American Legion Auxiliary members that helped

me.

And it is because of those moments that I spent year after year seeing these women, from all over, that came to help veterans and their families. I cannot forget that part of my history. And I know that I am a member today because of that, because of these women.

And I want to thank you for allowing me to come and speak. I want to thank you for your support. If elected as the national historian, I promise to do my very best to share the history, the new stories, the everyday stories that come out that show us caring for others, because that's what we do. We're unique people. And we love our veterans and military families.

So I want to thank you again and God bless you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

MS. WALKER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations.

MS. WALKER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: This concludes the

nominations for the 2025-2026 national officers.
We will proceed with the election of national officers.

You have nominated Pam Ray, of Illinois, for the office of national president. In accordance with the rules you have adopted, if there is but one candidate for an office, the nominee will be by elect -- will be elected by voice. All in favor of electing Pam Ray as national president for the 2025-2026 administrative year, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All opposed, please say no.

The chair declares Pam Ray, of Illinois, duly elected as national president for the 2025-2026 administrative year. Pam, will you please stand?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Dr. Coral May Grout, of Massachusetts, is the only nominee for the

office of national vice president. All in favor of Dr. Coral May Grout for the office of national vice president, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

Dr. Coral May Grout has been duly elected as national vice president for the 2025-2026 administrative year.

Please stand, Coral.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: On Saturday, August 23rd, 2025, at the division caucuses, each division nominated a candidate for national division vice president. And the current division national vice presidents have certified to the chair the following nominee. Ann Buchanan has been nominated for the office of central division national vice president.

All those in favor of Ann Buchanan as national Central Division vice president, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed,
please say no.

Ann Buchanan has been duly elected as
national Central Division vice president. Ann,
please stand.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations.

Ree Ross has been nominated for the
office of national Eastern Division vice
president. All those in favor of Ree Ross for
national division vice president, please signify
by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed,
please say no.

You have elected Ree Ross as national
Eastern Division vice president. Ree, will you
please stand?

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Shareen Johnson has
been nominated for the office of national

Northwestern Division vice president. All those in favor of Shareen Johnson, national Northwestern Division vice president, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

You have elected Shareen Johnson as the national Northwestern Division vice president. Shareen, please stand.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Vickie Thrower-Mills has been nominated for the office of national Southern Division vice president. All those in favor of Vickie Thrower-Mills as the national Southern Division vice president, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

Vickie Thrower-Mills has been elected the national Southern Division vice president.

Vickie, please stand.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Joan Cannon has been nominated for the office of national Western Division vice president. All those in favor of Joan Cannon as the national Western Division vice president, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

Joan Cannon has been elected the national Western Division vice president, and is currently on a planned trip, but she is excited to accept in the 2025-2026 year.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Nancy Magginnis, of Indiana, is the only nominee for the office of national chaplain. All in favor of Nancy Magginnis for the office of national chaplain, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed,

please say no.

Nancy Magginnis has been duly elected as national chaplain for the 2025-2026 administrative year. Please stand, Nancy.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: For the election of national historian, we will be voting with our electronic keypads.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: The nominees are Hilary Ott and Angela Walker. If you would like to vote for Hilary Ott, please press the number 1 key. If you would like to vote for Angela Walker, please press the number 2 key. Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Voting is now closed. Please show the results.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The results are: national historian, Hilary Ott, 553; Angela Walker, 324. Hilary Ott has been duly elected as

national historian for the 2025-2026
administrative year. Please stand, Hilary.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Ladies and gentlemen,
I present to you your 2025-2026 American Legion
Auxiliary national officers.

(Applause)

(Music played)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Congratulations and
thank you, ladies. And a big thank-you to the
entire Elections and Tally Committee. And boy,
didn't we put them through the hopper.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: These women are here
early in the morning distributing those awesome
keypads, and they stay late every afternoon
collecting those awesome keypads after each
session. Please help me give these women a huge
round of applause.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: And thank you, thank

you, thank you for your patience with those awesome keypads.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'd like to recognize Judge Amy Luft and our officials: Dolores Chavez, Carla Benicki, Maureen O'Brien-Sacco, Debra Rumery, Lisamarie McCarley, Michelle Woodburn, Janelle Mendelson, and Tammy Zell -- and Janelle could not make it. It is Julie Smith from North Carolina.

Got you, Julie.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The American Legion Family of Post 178 in Grove, Oklahoma, was struggling. Now the post home is thriving, thanks to changes the unit post and squadron made through their events, mission outreach, and building renovations. Let's learn more about these changes and how it's made a positive difference in Oklahoma.

(Video played)

SPEAKER 1: Our town thrives on

tourism. We're -- we're a lake community. We have a population of 6,000 people that are permanent residents. But around holidays and seasonal, we have a population that grows to about 15 to 16,000. We host about 35 major fishing tournaments annually here on the lake. We've been involved in city government at different levels. We're very ingrained with the community in all aspects.

SPEAKER 2: This post was built in 1939. It used to be a milk and cheese factory and a train depot back then, before it opened as an American Legion post.

SPEAKER 1: Every part of our membership is intertwined. When we have our monthly Legion meeting, we have representatives from the Sons, we have representatives from the Auxiliary. But we basically work together on everything that we do with the community. When we have an event, we have representatives from all parts of the family. We're very strong together. Because at the end of the day, when we

go do one of those ceremonies, it's not about necessarily the Legion, but it's about the brother or the sister that we lost.

In 2018, this post, we basically did not have enough to cover the next utility bill coming due. And -- or until this post was about ready to be lost.

SPEAKER 2: So we started bingo in order to make more money, because we only had \$68 in the bank, which was not enough to pay for the utilities.

SPEAKER 1: A few of us got involved, went up to Kansas, picked up a couple bingo sets. We were able to remanufacture them from the parts we had, make the one operating set, take the second operating set and sell it to cover our initial costs and setups, getting licensed with ABLE, the -- which controls the -- the Oklahoma state agency that controls all of our bingo and everything.

SPEAKER 2: And after that, we opened the post for free coffee and donuts, Monday to

Friday, 8:00 to noon. And we had more influx of veterans. We did a lot of work on this building. We painted, we did the floors, we got more of the members involved, to help the building look better and -- and more conducive for them to come in, and make -- make them feel at home.

And what can we do for them in order for them to come to our meetings, that way they know what we're doing. And what can we do to help them? But working together as a family makes it grow stronger. Getting involved in community is really a big thing. Open your post to your veterans. Maybe just two or three times a week. It doesn't have to be five -- five days a week.

SPEAKER 1: We've slowly upgraded over the years. Now we're at the point where our post is sponsoring Boys State, Girls State students, not only from our own local community, but our other communities around us that may not have the financial availability. We've made an absolutely astronomic turnaround on our financial sense, to

be able to get where we're at now and be able to give back to the community.

SPEAKER 2: What really brings the -- the community -- and knows that we are here, is we put out more than 1,000 flags Memorial Day, 4th of July, Veterans Day. And we have three cemeteries, and of course the F4, and we are so proud of doing that.

SPEAKER 1: With all the branches, the American, and then several smaller Americans, that basically surround it in a crescent.

SPEAKER 3: We're going to Okinawa. You're fixing to head to Korea.

SPEAKER 2: What I do is I always ask them, are you a member of the American Legion? And also, are you married? Do you have kids, grandchildren? Because they can all be members.

SPEAKER 1: Bring everybody in, all hands on deck for everything, regardless of how big or small of a community involvement. Get all of your different family and get the Legion and get the Riders in. Get the Sons in. Get the

Auxiliary in. Bring in your sons, your grandsons. I have three daughters who are in the Auxiliary. I have a wife in the Auxiliary. I have two sons in the SAL.

So have those sons that can help you go put out 1,200 flags on Memorial Day or Veterans Day at the cemeteries. We have the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts. Have them come out there. It's -- they're very lightweight, but all you got to do is give them a map of where the headstones are and they go place them. And it makes it a whole lot easier.

SPEAKER 2: When I first came in the unit, we only had 30 members. Right, now we have 68.

SPEAKER 1: Originally, the F4 program was put together by a few of our members, but it wasn't actually done from the American Legion. It was through their own program they went through, started the fundraising, got everything put together, got the funds, had it transported here from Arizona, got it all put together. We

had a lot of our local contractors who donated the concrete that you see out there.

And then after everything was set and complete, The American Legion post here basically adopted the program and brought it into our F4 program, to where we now are basically the custodians of it, to make sure that it's maintained, cleaned on a semi-regular basis.

With the post, it was seeming very doom and gloom for the future, seven years ago, and now it is set for the future, for generations. We've managed to set it up to where if -- if we have good stewards of the purse, this post will be here forever. We're very well financially stable, as long as we have the people that are still wanting to put in the work for our veteran community, to make sure we're doing the right thing for our veterans.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I know we have a lot of business to discuss today, but I talked about this little post as I traveled the country. They

do one thing really, really well. They work together. And I know that they make everyone feel welcome.

When I moved to Grove, Oklahoma in 2014, Steve and I went to visit that post. We said, I'm not going in there. It's falling -- falling down on itself. It is broken. The windows are broken. But a couple of years later, people like you turned it around. It can happen. It just takes people who care.

And that little post is thriving and it is a centerpiece of our community. I'm so, so, so honored to have president of Oklahoma, Susan Engstrom here, who is part of that vignette. Well done, 178.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The role of the national Membership Committee is to encourage and support our nationwide efforts to attract and retain a diverse and active membership, because members are the Auxiliary's most valuable asset.

Here to present the membership report

is national membership chair, April Sinclair.

(Music played)

MS. SINCLAIR: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. SINCLAIR: Madam President,
members, and guests, welcome. A rare opportunity
happened this year when the departments had the
opportunity to have an active role in setting
their membership goal.

Soon after DLNC, the excitement took
off.

(Laughter)

MS. SINCLAIR: Well, hold for a moment.
The excitement actually began at DLNC, with the
news of leading the way through nature's
elements. It's one of those things that you
might say you had to have been there. You just
can't make these things up.

What an amazing year we've had to keep
members engaged and actively participating.
Catchy and fun themes were created by the
department presidents and membership chairs.

Examples included "it's raining members" from the Department of New Hampshire, to New Jersey's "bridging the gap, one plank at a time", and the Department of Maine "piece by piece, completing the membership puzzle". We can't forget the "Willy Wonka, how sweet it is" thing from the Department of West Virginia.

And take a picture -- take a peek here, department of -- excuse me, department presidents with the West Virginia, they got the national president involved whenever she visited West Virginia. There were several songs created. "You're still the one" in Utah, to the Department of Florida, "we built this unit on membership".

Have you heard of membership Mondays? Well, this is exactly what Unit 146, from the Department of West Virginia -- excuse me, Department of Virginia did when they held membership Mondays. This was between the hours of 4:00 and 7:00. This allowed members to come in, pay their dues, questions were answered, and data updates were done, as well as new

applications. I just love this idea.

The Department of Pennsylvania, Unit
656 West Alexander --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: I'm waiting for it.
They had a unique idea for promoting membership.
Over the Memorial Day holiday, the weekend, they
set up a table at a rest stop along Highway 70.
They distributed poppies and were ready to share
great things about our Auxiliary, as well as the
Legion family. What a fantastic idea, I just
love -- love -- love. Members were present in
the communities, branded and ready to go with
their elevated speeches, and applications in
hand.

This is exactly what Unit 115, from the
Department of Arizona, did when they were present
at the Home and Garden Show. This was a Legion
family event. Interestingly, the Department of
Arizona also reported assisting over 90 veterans
with VA benefit inquiries, with the support of
having a service officer present. Now, I'm very

sure that this was reported in your VA&R report, correct? Yes, very nice.

Let's talk a little bit about the Department of Florida.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Very new crew was always ready to recruit, renew, reclaim, and for that fact, rejuvenate. Department Jan Farrington --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: She -- she credits every member for their incredible work ethic and drive in the membership program. Dara was always ready, whether at lunch, planes, trains, and let's say automobiles as well. Dara had her elevated speech and applications always ready to go.

Switching gears a bit, let's talk numbers. Awesome work to all the chartered, rechartered, and revitalized units. This year, 27 units, new charters, and 26 recharters, or revitalized units. Very, very nice.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: On the Recruit Rejoined Ten Award, there were 418 members who received the awesome speaker. What a great gift that was. Thank you very much. I'm still hoping to snag me one before my tenure is up.

Oh, what a ride. 34 departments reached 85 percent goal by March 15th --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: -- a deadline I will never forget. Congratulations, once again, to those 34 departments and also for those that went on to receive the Merit Medallion Award. And --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: -- 16 departments listed, on the next slide, went on to receive 95 percent gold by National Poppy Day. Eight departments reached 100 percent by July 4th, receiving \$250 toward the advancement of the ALA programs.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: And those departments were: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii,

Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, Virginia.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: And as of the last reporting, we have one more to add, Ohio.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Five departments hit 102 percent or higher by July 26th, which made them eligible to receive \$500 toward the advancement of the ALA programs. And of course, they are: Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Oh, but wait, we aren't done yet. Let's focus on the divisions. Divisions were back and forth all year. Air, water, earth, fire, and lots of energy was put into divisions -- put the divisions on edge, week after week, waiting on numbers.

As of Monday reporting, I received numbers from Kelly Harrier -- love her. In fifth place, Northwestern Division, energy, at 90.56 percent.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Central Division, air --
representing air, 95.41 percent.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Eastern Division in
third, representing water, at 98.09 percent.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Pause for a moment.
Between Southern and Western Division, in fourth
place, Southern Division, 98.61 percent -- excuse
me, that was second place. And number 1 is
Western Division, fire --

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: -- 99.17 percent.
Congratulations to --

AUDIENCE: The west is the best.

MS. SINCLAIR: The west is the best.
Everyone -- everyone is the best. That
separation was 0.56, less than -- what, half a
point. So great job.

Overall, as of Monday, the entire
nation, we stand at 96.51 percent, which is a
total of 5,000 -- 540,083 members. Hats off to

any and everyone who has had any part in the membership, which that is all of you. So thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Membership is more than numbers. Yes, the numbers always look great, especially knowing your membership is your voice. And every voice counts. However, recognizing and valuing your current and active members is a must.

Take, for instance, the Department of Wisconsin membership chair, Amy Luft. She has what is called well-check calls. They have developed a standard operating procedure down to materials needed and best practice methods for units. Now, I'm very positive that the Department of Wisconsin will share this project, this well-check project, with you all.

The Department of Texas, they had a different approach to engaging members. There's this thing called the butterfly effect. The concept of the butterfly effect is to -- is a way

to capture members stories, stories of how they first became introduced to the American Legion.

And finally, if you have not had the opportunity to view the fantastic video entitled "Members Remember", now available on YouTube, created in part by the Department of New York, Unit 1718, interviews were conducted by junior unit president Katherine Mazaroski. It was a one-on-one sit down interview with current members. Awesome ways, all of these examples, for engaging members and sharing history. Nice job.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: In closing. Always remember your why. Celebrating and honoring your veteran. Our members -- our membership goes well beyond the benefits. It's the opportunity to say I am a proud member of the American Legion Auxiliary and Legion family. And because of my ancestry, and the veteran whom I am eligible, and their sacrifice, I continue to be committed to this organization.

Thank you to the entire membership committee who served with me. And a big shout out and kudos to the entire fantastic national membership staff for all your support and assistance.

Madam president, thank you for this appointment, and this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

MS. SINCLAIR: Oh, but wait. I think membership has a resolution.

PRESIDENT WARD: Will the Resolutions chair please present?

MS. KINNICK: Madam President and convention delegates, resolution number 1, titled membership eligibility, "whereas the American Legion Auxiliary mission promotes service and support to veterans, military, their families; and whereas the American Legion is a diverse and inclusive organization; and whereas the American Legion Auxiliary seeks to be an organization inclusive of anyone who supports veterans,

military and their families; and whereas eligibility for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary is determined by the American Legion; and whereas, the American Legion changed their governing documents to allow all spouses to become members of the American Legion Auxiliary in 2019; and whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary changed its constitution in 2019 to update without American Legion Auxiliary governing board action, should the American Legion further change its constitution regarding eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary; and whereas, the most recent revised IRS regulation for 501(c)(19) organization states,

"A veterans post or organization must meet the following requirements to be exempt under Section 501(c)(19): It must be organized in the United States or any of its possessions. At least 75 percent of its members must be past or present members of the United States Armed Forces. At least 97.5 percent of its members must be present or former members of the United

States Armed Forces; cadets, including only students in college or university ROTC programs or at armed services academies; or spouses, widows, widowers, ancestors, or lineal descendants of individuals referred to in the first or second bullet. It must be operated exclusively for one or more of the following purposes: To promote the social welfare of the community, example, to promote the common good and general welfare of the people of the community; to assist disabled or needy war veterans and members of the United States Armed Forces and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans; to provide entertainment, care, and assistance to hospitalized veterans or members of the United States Armed Forces; to carry on programs to perpetuate the memory of deceased veterans and members of the United States Armed Forces and comfort their survivors; to conduct programs for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes; to sponsor or participate

in activities of a patriotic nature; to provide insurance benefits for members or their dependents; or to provide social and recreational activities for members. 5: No part of its net earnings may endure to benefit of any private shareholder or individual.'

"And whereas, the most recent revised IRS regulation for 501(c)(19) organization states, 'an organization may be exempt under Section 501(c)(19) as an auxiliary unit or society of a veterans post or organization, if it meets the following requirements: It is affiliated with and organized in accordance with the bylaws and regulations of a veterans post or organization described above; 2, at least 75 percent of its members are veterans, spouses of veterans, or related to a veteran, within two degrees of consanguinity, example, grandparent, brother, sister, grandchild represent the most distant allowable relationships; number 3, all members are either members of a veterans post or organizations described above, or spouses of a

member of such post or organization, or are related to a member of such post or organization within two degrees of consanguinity; no part of its net earning insurers -- insures to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.'" "

And now for -- "now therefore, be it resolved by the American Legion Auxiliary National Convention delegates assembled in Tampa, Florida, August 22nd to the 28th, 2025, requests that The American Legion change its governing documents to allow membership in the American Legion Auxiliary for all currently noneligible grandparents, parents, siblings, spouse, natural and adopted descendants, regardless of gender, related to The American Legion eligible member, within two degrees of consanguinity.

"And be it finally resolved, should the American Legion change its governing documents to allow membership in the American Legion Auxiliary for all currently noneligible grandparents, parents, siblings, spouse, natural and adopted

descendants, regardless of gender, related to the American Legion eligible member, the American Legion Auxiliary shall immediately allow into American Legion Auxiliary membership grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, natural and adopted descendants to the American Legion eligible member, within two degrees of consanguinity."

The Pre-Convention Membership Committee recommends that this resolution be adopted.

Madam President, on behalf of the Resolutions Committee, I move the adoption of the resolution as just read.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Before we proceed, I would like to just offer a point of clarification. The American Legion sets the eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary. And this is, in essence, an official ask to the American Legion. I want to make sure everyone understands that.

You're not voting on this to change our eligibility. You are voting on the official ask

to The American Legion. The question is on the adoption of the resolution, as just read. The Membership Pre-Convention Committee recommends that the resolution be adopted. Is there discussion?

MS. CARLTON: Microphone 1.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. CARLTON: Madam President, Fran Carlton, the Department of Florida. It seems to me that this resolution leaves out one major group, and that would be male Legionnaires. Female Legionnaires are eligible in our organization through their own service, and with all of these other extended family members being included, I believe that male Legionnaires should be included also, so that they could be dual members like the female Legionnaires.

So I move to amend the resolution to add male Legionnaires, be members under their own service, or be eligible under their own service.

PRESIDENT WARD: Is that on a motion

form, been submitted to the head table?

MS. CARLTON: No, ma'am, I just did it.
Can I go get a form and submit it to you?

PRESIDENT WARD: It has to be -- it has to be submitted immediately.

MS. CARLTON: All right. Then I can't -- I withdraw the motion.

PRESIDENT WARD: There is other discussion at the microphone. So if you get the form and submit it through, we can handle it. And it -- it's helpful if you -- if you speak in -- if you speak in favor or in opposition to the resolution, and it adds clarity for the chair. Thank you so much.

The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. MORRIS: Thank you, Deborah Morris, Department of New York. I rise in favor of this. I think this is a wonderful thing for us. I mean, we have the female veterans, their spouses. Now it's town -- time for the parents, and grandparents, and the sons that can't belong, to

belong. What a wonderful thing this will do for our membership. I rise in favor of it.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion. The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. KRAFT: Rose Kraft, the Department of South Dakota. I am not in support of this resolution. With the information that you gather on membership forms, I see this as a logistic mess, that the people we are looking at for members are not eligible elsewhere. The -- this whole proposal is for if you're not eligible to join the American Legion or the Sons, then you can join the Auxiliary. And I understand this is an ask that we're voting on, but I just am not in favor of this at this time. We have other avenues we could be looking at.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion.

The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. WIDMER: Hi. Shannon Widmer,
Department of New Jersey. Standing opposed.
I -- I'm sorry, ladies, I have stepchildren that
are on active duty bases that are not qualified
to become members of the Auxiliary. People that
could be our juniors, that are true under
eligibility, that are serving with their
families, but we're going to allow others --
siblings, when our own children can't. If they
are under us and we are claiming them as
dependents, they should be allowed before
extended family.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your
discussion.

The chair recognizes the delegate at
microphone 2.

MS. COLSON: Thank you, Madam
President. Corrinna Colson, Department of
Vermont. So that -- Vermont is where this
resolution stemmed from. As the membership chair
for a unit in Vermont, we came across situations
where the -- when I tried to sign up somebody

under a sibling, the sister of the sibling was eligible, but the brothers were not. The fathers were not. The grandfathers were not, if there was no other connection to the military.

So as the membership chair, and going in as a membership chair for national eastern division, I find that it's very tough for us to gather membership. If you look at the numbers over the years, it's been declining. And this is one population that is not eligible anywhere.

And I understand about the -- the great grands. I understand about the step -- the steps. But this is one population. Why is it OK for us to sign up somebody's sister, but not their brother, their father, or their grandfather? Aren't all of these individuals just as proud of their veterans as any of us?

(Applause)

MS. COLSON: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. DAUGHTRY: Thank you very much.

Judy Daughtry, Department of Alabama. I rise in approval of this amend -- this resolution. But I just would be amiss if I did not say to you, at some point in time, please figure out a way that we can get our great-granddaughters in.

(Applause)

MS. DAUGHTRY: And I say that, as a Vietnam veteran era, in my 70s, that we are missing a large group of people. I realize it is an IRS thing, but there has got to be a way. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Please understand that would require the IRS changing the code from two degrees of consanguinity to three degrees of consanguinity. So that would be a code change for the IRS. Thank you.

MS. DAUGHTRY: I realize that. I just ask that we find some way to do that in the very near future.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion.

The chair recognizes the delegate at

microphone 1.

MS. RUE: Mindi Rue, Department of Ohio. I stand opposed to this. The ask to the American Legion for this eligibility change would cost political capital. And their agenda that they're already pushing is costing them the political capital. We don't have all of the members that we could have right now eligible. Until then, I think this -- this should be pushed to the side.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion.

The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. RAETHER: Martha Raether from Arizona. We have families that -- fathers that volunteer and come to our post, that spend hours and hours and they're not eligible. His daughter served and there's -- his son cannot be eligible because his sister is serving. And I -- I am in favor of this because we do need those people that want to be -- that they're in alignment, but

they're not eligible because they're a father and a son -- or a brother. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. HENSLEY: Kristen Hensley, delegate for Department of Kansas. I am speaking opposed to this only because of one word, and that is, any ineligible descendants. What -- regardless of gender, I feel that this is going to get shot down in the Legion side, because that would completely go against all efforts to revitalize the Sons of the Legion.

And even though that -- yes, they could be dual members. A lot of people in the Midwest, you're lucky if they got two nickels to rub together, and they're going to compare the two different dues and choose one, not both.

So I honestly think that this would be harming to the Legion family, as it is stated

there. Now, if they changed it from female -- to female descendants instead of all descendants, regardless of gender, because the way it's worded to, it's all ineligible.

You know, descendants, regardless of gender, is that ineligible for the Auxiliary or is that ineligible for any Legion? So it doesn't specify.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion. The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. KAARE: Linda Kaare, Department of Michigan. This is very personal to our family. I have a half-brother and a nephew who are totally -- they have no place in the American Legion. My brother, his son is a West Point grad, an Army veteran. His grandson just graduated from West Point.

My nephew has, you know, obviously a brother who is a veteran and a nephew who is now in the Army. They have no place in the American Legion. These are strong God and country people.

They would benefit our Auxiliary and have a place with us, and we should welcome.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your conversation. The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone --

MS. CADWALLADER: 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: -- 3. Thank you.

MS. CADWALLADER: Lisa Cadwallader, Department of West Virginia. Honestly, I think it -- I think the whole resolution needs a little more attention because it talks about lineal -- lineal descendants, and then further down it talks about siblings. Siblings are not under the lineal chart of the veteran. Siblings of the veteran are not lineal.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion. The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 2.

MS. DEL ROSARIO: Kimberly Del Rosario from the -- Georgia. I'd just like to say that somebody before me spoke about great-

grandchildren, daughters not being able to join anymore, and we say it's an IRS thing.

How can the sons of the Legion join -- great-grandsons, and that not be a problem?

PRESIDENT WARD: The Sons are a program of the American Legion, not an Auxiliary, which the IRS rules specific to auxiliaries of veterans service organizations. The Sons and the Riders are programs of the American Legion. Great-grandsons are eligible under the program of the American Legion. Thank you.

The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 1.

MS. PAPP: Thank you. Excuse me. Thank you. I'm Lisa Marie Papp from the District 7 of Georgia and Department of Georgia. I'm actually opposed to this, on the regards of -- a previous person up here said about stepchildren. I'll take it one step further. Stepchildren and half.

I have a possible member who has a daughter but also has a stepdaughter. The

stepdaughter cannot join, but the daughter can. And I think that that would be a disservice to the family who wants to support a family member who did serve as well as their belief. So I think that's where -- where something should be put in for stepchildren and halves.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for your discussion.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 4.

MS. HEATLY: Thank you, Madam President. Holly Heatly, delegate of Texas.

I call for the question.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It requires a second.

AUDIENCE: Second.

PRESIDENT WARD: Is there any objection to declining further discussion? Therefore, we will move to the question, and we will vote by acclamation.

All those in favor of adopting the

resolution as presented, please signify by saying aye?

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please say no.

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: The resolution requires a majority and the noes have it. The resolution is not adopted.

(Applause)

MS. TIERNAN: Madam President, microphone 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone three.

MS. TIERNAN: Deb Tiernan, Department of Vermont. The Eastern Division would like to present a resolution. "Whereas the Unit Guide Book was changed and most, if not all, ceremonies were removed from the Unit Guide Book; Whereas units rely on these printed ceremonies for meetings, ceremonies, and events; and whereas there are no published guides or books offered

with these ceremonies. Now therefore, be it resolved that national print a book of ceremonies containing the ones removed from the Unit Guide Book, and any additional ones that may assist a member in service. And be it further resolved that this printed book of ceremonies be made available in printed form as an accessible resource to all members to aid in their meetings, events, and service to veterans, their families, and communities."

Madam President, the Eastern Division strongly recommends that this resolution be adopted. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: I have a point of clarification to the delegate at microphone 3. Can you clarify if this was recommended for adoption at the Eastern Division caucus?

MS. TIERNAN: Yes, ma'am.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. Is there a copy for the head table?

MS. TIERNAN: It was submitted already to Tamara (phonetic).

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. I need a copy of the head table, Tamara. I believe it was sent to Tamara. Stand by please.

MS. CLAPP: Madam Chairman, microphone number 3.

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at microphone 3.

MS. CLAPP: Good morning.

PRESIDENT WARD: Good morning.

MS. CLAPP: Past National President Nicole Clapp, Department of Iowa. Point of clarification. With this printed manual, we do not have anything in the budget, nor were we alerted to this from the Finance Committee perspective.

If it was something like a unit handbook to be printed and be purchased, obviously, that would not impact our budget. But right now we don't have anything set aside for that, for a point of clarification.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for that point of clarification. And once we can -- this

will not require a second, as it came from the Eastern Division caucus and I will be asking for discussion. So hold, please.

To the delegate from Vermont, could you please bring your document to the head table from which you read?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President?

PRESIDENT WARD: The chair recognizes the delegate at some microphone.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: One.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes. Madam President, a clarification, please. I didn't quite understand what Vermont you wanted. Are they asking to have a book printed, because the manual ceremonies is online.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Originally, the inquiry to the national registered parliamentarian is, they were recommending that the book be printed. The delegate read it as be printed.

So recommending something and doing something are two completely different things. So the delegate presented it as being printed. Our original inquiry was recommended to be printed.

MS. TIERNAN: Madam President, microphone 3. As a clarification, we did use for an example the printed book of Junior Activities, national Constitution & Bylaws, which can be purchased. We were not asking for this to be given. We were asking it to be published and to be purchased.

It may be online, but a lot of people use their phones. A lot of people have spotty Wi-Fi, and if you're installing someone, you lose your signal. You lose your ceremony. And not everybody has a printer. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for that clarification.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: It does not require a second, as it came from the Eastern Division

caucus.

Is there any discussion on the resolution as presented? Hearing none. We will vote by acclamation.

All those in favor of adopting the resolution as presented, please signify by saying aye.

AUDIENCE: Aye.

PRESIDENT WARD: All those opposed, please signify by saying no.

AUDIENCE: No.

PRESIDENT WARD: I call division. All those in favor of the resolution as presented, please stand. Thank you. Please be seated.

All those in favor of the resolution -- all those opposed to the resolution as presented, please stand.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: I cannot call the majority from the standing count. We will use the keypads.

All those in favor of the resolution

being adopted as presented, please press the number 1 key. All those opposed, please press the number 2 key.

Please vote now.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'd like to make a point of clarification before announcing the vote. The resolution is to have the Master [sic] of Ceremonies printed and have available for sale through Emblem Supply.

Did everyone understand that?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. The ayes have it and the resolution is adopted.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: 527 in the affirmative. 305 in the negative. It clears the majority vote. Thank you.

Making our communities better is something Auxiliary members strive for every day. Please welcome Anita Biggs, national Community Service Chair, to tell us more about our members

and how they contributed to their communities.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. BIGGS: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. BIGGS: Y'all been having fun out here, huh? To make a difference in someone's world, you don't have to be amazing, rich, talented, or beautiful. You just have to be you and care. This is a quote from Rebecca Fox, author.

Madam President, this quote epitomizes the ALA Community Service members this year, with 100 percent reporting from a great committee. We learned throughout the country, members organized, supported, and collaborated with their communities to assist in different projects.

Members reported an astounding 1,145,000 plus hours and spent over three million plus dollars and in-kind donations provided to communities. We poured out our hearts.

(Applause)

MS. BIGGS: Oh yeah, that's great job. We poured out our hearts and donations to help others. Units across the country participated in 9/11 National Day of Service programs. New Mexico members from Unit 80 held a somber commemoration of 9/11 by standing on a bridge overlooking the highway, holding American flags for two hours.

Las Vegas Unit 8 collaborated with its post to host an annual remembrance ceremony. Nearby firefighters were invited and served lunch to honor their service.

Martin Luther Jr. Day of Service is an outstanding way for unit members to share what we do to assist the community. Units participated in commemorative marches, parades, clothing drives to assist the homeless, and food drives.

A unit in West Virginia donated an AED to the Veterans Home on MLK day. Great job.

(Applause)

MS. BIGGS: Food insecurity is prevalent throughout this country and units

assisted those who are suffering. A unit in Ohio teamed up with junior members to get on board Little Annie's Hope Train to pack brown bag lunches for the homeless. Little Annie delivers lunches to the homeless in the Cleveland area. And with her beautiful smile and generous attitude, California members went to Skid Row to make sure the homeless receive a satisfying meal.

There are units helping their community by donating food to homeless shelters, food banks, churches, senior centers, schools, and their own members.

The Department of Michigan --

(Applause)

MS. BIGGS: -- yeah -- reported that their units donated winter coats, gloves, scarves, socks, and pillows. Unit members volunteered at a share center that offers services that help -- offer services that help overcome housing crises experienced by homeless veterans.

Another unit collected items such as

toothbrushes, raincoats, stocking caps, hand and toe warmers for the fire department called HOT, that stands for Homeless Outreach Team. This team collaborates with social workers, the police department, and other organizations to help the homeless population. This is just a small sample of the outstanding community service work being done in Michigan.

The American Legion initiated American Legion Family Day in 2022, which is held annually on the last day in April. Florida Unit 54 did an excellent job displaying all the work of their Legion family --

(Applause)

MS. BIGGS: -- and appreciation to the community. They had decorated tables with information and a huge bounce house for the kids.

California Unit 252 collaborated with the U.S. Vets 5K run and held the family day with their community, while they volunteered for the event that raised funds for the homeless veterans.

Unit members reached across the Country to assist victims of natural disasters experienced this year.

Illinois Unit 290 established a supply line, collecting money and supplies to assist hurricane victims in North Carolina.

California experienced horrific wildfires that caused the loss of thousands of homes and many lives. The entire state jumped into action, along with members across the country, raising thousands of dollars and distributed much needed items to help those affected.

Members across this country participated in various community service events, including National Night Out, blood drives, CPR training, cancer awareness, Meals on Wheels, supporting people experiencing homelessness, senior care centers, holiday parties, food banks, and much more.

I wish I could report on all the wonderful work of community service this year,

but there's just not enough time. Just know that the ALA members are upholding our mission to make our communities a better place to live every day.

Madam President, this concludes my remarks.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Anita.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Legislative Committee plays a vital role in our organization, by equipping our members with the tools and information they need to advocate on behalf of The American Legion Family with their local officials.

Today, she will share the committee's achievements and future goals. Please join me in welcoming upcoming National Legislative Chair Sallie Rossman to present her report.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. ROSSMAN: Madam President, Margaret Mead stated, never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the

world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

The American Legion Auxiliary was actively involved in advocating for the Legion's legislative agenda. Members supported it by understanding key priorities and communicating with elected officials about upcoming legislations at all levels of the government.

This knowledge was essential for providing persuasive information to change officials' minds or reform attitudes towards important legislation.

Members utilize the legislative committee's resources to learn about the Auxiliary's legislative program and access the Legion's legislative and grassroots center websites.

This training prepared them to advocate for the Legion's priorities. Recognizing that complex legislative language could discourage participation. The Department of Florida broke down key legislation into simpler components and

highlighted its benefits.

(Applause)

MS. ROSSMAN: In Wisconsin, tech-savvy members assisted others with technology at meetings, while Iowa members distributed index cards with a QR code for easy access to the Grassroots Action Center.

Ohio Unit 764 engaged members by having them research the legislators and draft letters on various issues, fostering a greater understanding of the political process.

Every day at 7 a.m., a message appeared on the Illinois Department Facebook page. It read, "While you enjoy your morning coffee or hot tea and scroll through Facebook, now is the perfect time to send a letter through the legislative action." Alert your -- you -- "you can send letters every day. It only takes a few clicks of your phone".

In Iowa, Unit 129 hosted legislative coffees during the legislative sessions so the public could speak with legislators.

These methods have raised members' awareness of their ability to write or customize 51,039 letters to address their priorities, with representatives, boosting the involvement in the legislative program.

The Get Out to Vote campaign provided ideas on how to engage the program effectively. Members conducted voter registration on the Get Out to Vote campaigns, hosted or participated in nonpartisan candidate forums, promoted the importance of voting, provided transportation to voting polls for community members, and provided child care where -- well -- while parents went to vote.

Florida Unit 418, through the relationship with the Supervisor of Elections, participated in Adopt-a-Precinct, with branded members serving as poll workers.

Throughout the year, members promoted the Legion's priorities at various meetings and events, including town halls and legislative sessions.

Indianapolis District 11 held a senior's legislative day at the state capitol, where World War II Air Force pilot Margaret Brown celebrated her 101st birthday.

Meanwhile, California Unit 252 members advocated for the 6888 Postal Battalion and all Black women's World War II Army unit to receive the Congressional Gold Medal through telephone calls, door-to-door outreach, and letters.

The Washington --

(Applause)

MS. ROSSMAN: -- the Washington Conference legislative commission meeting was historic, as it was held in the Cannon Building caucus room on Capitol Hill for the first time. The American Legion's national commander, along with members of the American Legion family. He testified before the joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, advocating for 1.6 million veterans.

National Commanders Jim LaCoursiere changed the narrative testimony, addressed

concerns about national security due to declining military enlistment, the need to modernize weaponry, and the challenges faced during the transition to civilian life. He urged Congress to strengthen its commitment to veterans who have served and sacrificed for this country.

The Auxiliary is vital in advocating for the American Legion's legislative agenda, from local to national government. We speak for those who have answered the call to service of our country and defended our freedom of speech. Therefore, it is crucial to use this freedom to advocate for our veterans, service members and families.

Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Sallie.

MS. ROSSMAN: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: The Leadership Committee aims to equip our members with the confidence and skills needed to excel in

leadership roles. Here to share her report is
National Leadership Chair Barbara Washburn.

(Applause)

(Music played)

AUDIENCE: Happy birthday, Barb
(phonetic).

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: Thank you. Naughty,
naughty. Thank you everyone. Madam National
President Trish and convention attendees.

Robin Ruff, Department of Wyoming's
Leadership chair shared this thought in her year-
end report: "For some reason, the word
leadership sends terror into people's hearts.
Did they feel threatened, out of their depth? In
reality, we are all leaders in one form or
another. I see leaders in every aspect of our
American Legion Auxiliary family", end quote.

I don't suppose anyone in this
convention hall has ever felt that way, right?
So what is leadership? National President Trish
summed leadership up in one word, it's theory.

You can't find it in a store. You can't hold it in your hands. However, you can find it in your hearts, as our members did during this past year.

I want to begin by sharing some of the excellent ideas from leadership workshops and conferences. Making the pieces fit was a highlight for Alabama members, as they assembled puzzles, learning that the missing piece of their puzzles was you. Other departments utilized this idea throughout the year.

Nebraska members played ALA Family Feud during their workshop, complete with Steve Harvey hosting. Attendees work together to answer questions about ALA programs.

Wisconsin leadership held three ALA In The Know sessions. Attendees were asked to list three reasons why they would not want to serve as an officer or chair. Time management, responsibilities required, and inclusion were the top three. Ideas on how to address each of these were presented at their mid-winter workshop.

Throughout the departments, there was a

revival of good old-fashioned mentoring. Leadership chairs, working directly with units to provide resources and ideas to those struggling. Many reported utilizing co-chairs to mentor new chairs. Training sessions covering year end reporting and awards, parliamentary procedure, protocol, and nurturing a culture of goodwill were among the ways members participated in mentoring.

Here's a great idea. Unit 51, in Dallas, Texas, was hosting monthly team building excursions. A former unit president from Unit 20 in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, revitalized her unit following COVID by growing their unit from one member to an active unit supporting military and core ALA programs. A true example of mentoring and leadership.

Juniors – let's not forget them. They actively participated in meetings and were shown the ropes, learning how to create an agenda, and shadowing officers, and chairs. Hats off to the juniors in Wisconsin, who led a session where

senior members were able to work on the patch program. What a creative way for our juniors to educate and mentor us.

ALA Academy was such an important cog in the leadership wheel, with many units and departments encouraging its use to learn and stay informed about ALA topics.

Diane Belew (phonetic) from Mississippi, she provided incentives to units that completed the most courses based on per capita enrollment, not just the total number of courses. What a great idea.

Vice Chair Past National President Kathy Daudistel and I were overwhelmed at the number of unit member of the year nominations we received from 46 departments.

(Applause)

MS. WASHBURN: Many departments reported an increase in the number of nominations received, making it a difficult task to choose just one. Please continue to identify and support these informal leaders, who are dedicated

to your unit, and help keeping it -- move forward.

A recurring theme in many reports was the importance of being civil towards one another, treating them with kindness and respect. The no-bully zone was evident in many departments. I challenge everyone to remember to be kind.

In closing, I would like to present the Five Graces of Leadership as shared by Michigan's Leadership Chair, Mary Anne Yunker. G, for gratitude; create that culture of appreciation. R, resilience; don't let fear hold you back. Aspiration, make tomorrow better than today. C, courage; have the courage to admit what we don't know. And E, empathy; meet others where they are and understand who they are.

Thank you, President Trish, for giving me this amazing opportunity to share leadership and mentoring ideas with our members. Most importantly, thank you to our members for taking that theory, and putting it into actual practice

through training and mentoring.

By leading the way together, we will continue to move our organization forward. Thank you, Madam National President Trish, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Barb. And the Leadership committee has no resolutions to present?

MS. WASHBURN: We have no resolutions. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Fantastic.

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: The Public Relations Committee showcases our identity, highlights our work, and emphasizes our significance. Through effective PR, we can enhance our reputation, increase brand recognition, and draw in new members.

Please welcome the National Public Relations Chair, Linda Tome.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. TOME: Madam National President Trish, and our convention attendees, good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. TOME: Can I see a show of hands from the audience who feels they promoted the American Legion Auxiliary through their public relations? Yeah, I don't see all of them going up.

(Laughter)

MS. TOME: But I bet most of you really did. Do you wear branded shirts, hats? Auxiliary logo pins? There you go. That's promoting the American Legion Auxiliary. Our public relations program supports the outreach of all of our programs.

Along with your branded attire, various media sources help spread the word about our mission. There were so many different platforms reported, some I actually never heard of. So thank you to our department chairs for your

reports and hard work. And thank you to our younger members from Gen Z and Gen Y for introducing some of these newer platforms to us.

But let's start at the beginning. The Department of Ohio has a straightforward three step plan for their public relations program. Step one, advertise the event by sharing who or what it benefits, when and where. This clarity increases community support, as they will know what they will be supporting.

Step two, take pictures at the event. A well-taken photo is worth 1,000 words and is invaluable for storytelling.

Step three, show the beneficiary receiving the proceeds. This transparency confirms to supporters that you fulfilled your promise.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: For instance, Unit 818 (sic) Bucyrus, Ohio raised \$5,000 at their annual patriotic dinner and show for the Judge Sara J. Harper Village for homeless female veterans.

This was Department President Louise Smerk's project, and a check was presented at their Past Commander's and President's Dinner. The results were published in their department newsletter, local newspapers, and on Facebook. Great job, Unit 818 (sic).

So the Department of West Virginia also created a flowchart for organizing a successful unit event. It provides step-by-step suggestions from writing a press release, and involving the Department historian and PR chair, to following up with the media outlets to clarify questions they may have.

It suggests documenting and preserving their legacy by saving copies of all the material in writing a brief summary of the event for future generations. This chart includes all the essential steps for a great public relations campaign for events.

Way to go, West Virginia.

(Applause)

MS. TOME: Now, let's look at how the

Department of Texas Midland Unit 19 further engaged the public. Jane Bennett and Sabrina Melton were interviewed on CBS7 to discuss the National Poppy Day and Memorial Day. They also took part in radio broadcasts and podcasts to promote the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary. What a fantastic way to spread our message.

Unit 126, in the Department of Pennsylvania educated viewers about Wreaths Across America, during an interview on WTAJ Studio 814, Unit President Adrienne Brumbaugh and member Morgan Koziar spoke for over five minutes about Wreaths Across America and the American Legion Auxiliary. You both looked like professionals during those interviews. I watched them. Outstanding job.

Now, the Department of Maryland's American Legion Auxiliary members braved the bitter cold during the annual Polar Bear Plunge in the Chesapeake Bay. They dove into the frigid water. Yeah, they dove into the frigid waters.

I've got goosebumps now -- proudly wearing their ALA branding and received great coverage on Maryland TV. But all I can say is brr, no thank you.

So that was all the big stuff. But in smaller towns, we often lack access to television or radio. So we rely on other forms of outreach like social media unit newsletters -- no, local newspapers, and the internet. Most of our units have websites or Facebook pages promoting upcoming events. We even use our personal Facebook pages.

I looked at many of your Facebook pages, this administrative year, and it's clear, we are leading the way with our public relations efforts. I see it. We are visible and we are proud.

But I so appreciated how Rebecca Farley, the PR chair of the Department of West Virginia, concluded her year by stating, and I quote, "The Department of West Virginia not only expanded -- expanded its reach, but deepened its

connection with communities through strategic communication, heartfelt storytelling, and intentional visibility. We ensured that the public not only saw what we did, but why we serve. As we move forward, we remain committed to sharing our story of service one press release, one newsletter, one broadcast, and one heart at a time".

Thank you to all the division chairs. Thank you to our members for a wonderful year. And thank you, Madam National President, this concludes my remarks. Thank you. Good luck, girl.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Linda. Awesome report. PR is so important. The Auxiliary Emergency Fund is so important because it's a perfect example of members helping members. It is in our most challenging times that we are so grateful for the generosity and support of others. Here with more on our Auxiliary Emergency Fund is National Chair

Brister Thomas.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. THOMAS: Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. THOMAS: And aloha.

AUDIENCE: Aloha.

MS. THOMAS: In the blink of an eye, life changes. A fire destroys a lifetime of memories. A storm floods the only place someone calls home. A pink slip arrives, unexpected, unwanted, and devastating. And life quickly changes from this to this.

(Video played)

VOICEOVER: This is my home. This is my home.

(Video ends)

MS. THOMAS: Families beaten down by Mother Nature. One hurricane after another. Losing every material possession, from furniture to clothing, photographs to keepsakes. One member shared this quote: "It's when your

mindset changes from what can I save to I am so thankful to be alive". And in these moments of fear, grief, desperation, there is hope and there is help. There is the Auxiliary Emergency Fund members helping members.

The stories are endless. The devastation is real. And every photo you see here today comes from one of our members. To all who have suffered, please know we stand with you and we hold you in our hearts until you heal.

This year, the AEF Committee has been purposely centered around two pillars, education and donation. Did you know that the AEF has been offering grants for over 55?

One example of educating is that we have -- applications are more private and streamlined now than ever. Applications are submitted directly to the ALA Foundation National Headquarters, ensuring confidentiality and efficiency. And remember, grants of up to \$3,000 may provide assistance to help those recover from disasters and financial hardships.

This fiscal year alone, the AEF more than doubled the number of grants awarded from 121 to 246 members helped. Now, while we don't want members to need the help, we take that number to represent that we're able to connect and reach those in need. 167 of those members received disaster relief and 79 members were supported through hardship relief.

Now let's talk dollars. We like that number up there. In just the first half of our fiscal year, the AEF had already doubled the dollar amounts awarded from the previous year. Now, for the first time ever, the AEF approaches half a million dollars in total grants.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: You made that possible. Thank you. This year we also announced exciting new ways to give. You can donate online and have it count towards your unit goals. And your unit goals count towards your department goals, and it takes less than a minute to set up a one-time or monthly donation from \$5 to one zillion dollars.

(Laughter)

MS. THOMAS: In fact, I ask you to take out your phone right now. Open up your camera, take a picture of the QR code, or go to the direct link. It takes less than one minute to set up your donation. Remember, every penny donated to AEF goes directly to a fellow member in need. It's our tradition of service, not self, lived out in real time.

So you may be asking, what are some fundraising ideas? Well, we have some inspiring ones to share with you today from across the nation.

The Department of Colorado launched a penny war challenge, collecting coins at every meeting. The unit with the most won bragging rights.

Now, the Department of Washington encouraged every unit to donate a member of a hundred dollars in Dean's Double Down (phonetic) challenge. Each contribution entered them into a drawing for this amazing handmade wooden eagle

flag. Also meeting Dean's Double Down challenge was the Department of New Mexico with a hundred percent participation in all 36 units donating.

Host a bake sale or hold an auction like the Department of Minnesota.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: A huge shout-out to Wisconsin's department president, who selected AEF as her project and raised over \$38,000.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: Huge. The Department of Dakota (sic) increased year to year, giving over ten percent by passing a hat at meetings and offering AEF wristbands.

The Department of -- sorry. The Department of Indiana created a --

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: -- a cardinal tree for growing -- I'm sorry for giving. And the Department of South Dakota --

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: -- created inspiring AEF

bags.

(Applause)

MS. THOMAS: In physical (sic) year '24-'25, over \$364,000 was raised to support the AEF program and our members during their time of need. Let's keep that growing.

Thank you to all the ALA entities and member donors who gave in service, not self. And Madam President, a huge thank you to you, for your support of AEF.

And in conclusion, it's been an honor to record and report these acts of kindness. Madam President, this concludes the AEF report.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Brister. And thank you for an amazing job this year.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our national historian strives to preserve, display, and share our history, traditions, and milestones. These efforts allow members the opportunity to look back and reconnect with our organization's rich past. Here to tell us more is national historian

Dara Oliver.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. OLIVER: History is heavy. Madam President. Hello, officers, members, and guests, and hello Florida. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who elected me as your national historian last year.

I truly love history, and this has been an absolute epic year, especially seeing what everyone is doing, hearing the stories of what all the departments are doing to make history for themselves.

We had 51 department historians participate in Zoom calls, emails, phone calls, messages, social media posts, and sending their visitation forms, reports, and written histories. We were invited to quarterly Zoom calls to promote history for our junior members, as well as inspire our department secretaries to assist our historians, and encourage others to write down our present, to eventually let it become our

history.

We increased our historians Facebook group from 1.2 thousand to 1.5 thousand members. And offered suggestions on how to write a history, how to preserve and protect your archives, the proper way to submit awards, as well as shared incredible historical stories and facts.

We also followed where National President Trish was in her travels. You can request to join that page.

Since installation last August, we posted over 900 photos, hundreds of reels, many videos, the rules and guidelines, highlighted accomplishments, downloadable forms, inspirational quotes, and lots of history.

In the month of February, we were able to write histories on some very special Auxiliary members for Black History Month. It was amazing what I learned about these women and their Auxiliary careers.

During the month of March, we

highlighted 31 other members, one for every day, in celebration of Women's History Month. It was a lot of research, but the history that was shared connected our members to the past, while looking toward the future.

Our goals are to implement necessary revisions to rules, to make them easier to understand, more user friendly, as well as possibly add a pictorial history book submission.

National President Trish asked me to do some research for some questions and tasked me with finding out reporting on some important ALA history and fun facts. So are you all ready for your history lesson?

Our organization was established in 1919 to support the American Legion. Dr. Helen Hughes Hielscher of Minnesota was charged with turning the disorganized units into various states for organized departments, before the national commander would issue the call for the first American Legion Women's Auxiliary National Convention.

As there was no elected national president to preside over that convention, Helen was elected by the delegates to serve as temporary chair to the convention. Edith Hobart was our first elected national president.

(Applause)

MS. OLIVER: And this was about the same time that the word "women's" was taken from its name. And in 19 -- I mean, I'm sorry. And in 2019, male spouses of veterans became eligible for the Auxiliary membership.

In 2009, the Auxiliary named Miriam Junge the Honorary Past National President for her many years of dedicated service to the ALA, including 30 years as national secretary.

And in 2021, we celebrated our 100th anniversary as COVID prevented the 2020 convention. Nicole Clapp was the honor only -- past national honorary junior president who served as national president and remained until the next convention.

Last August in 2024, Trish Ward from

Kansas was sworn in as our national president. She was our 103rd. On November 10th, 2024, the ALA turned 105 years old, and this is our 104th National Convention.

Madam National President Trish, this concludes my platform remarks. But may I make a special presentation?

PRESIDENT WARD: Please.

MS. OLIVER: The Department of Georgia cleaned up and found a book written by two very well-known historians named Joseph and Maud Lynch Toomey. Mrs. Toomey is the namesake of our national historian award.

This beautiful book was presented to me at their fall conference so that I could present it to Madam President Trish to be placed in our archives at National Headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. And it's heavy.

(Applause)

MS. OLIVER: Is that cool or what? Wild, right? So speaking of the Toomeys, I have the winner of the best department written

history. The Toomey award goes to Sharon Shumate from the Department of Texas.

(Applause)

MS. OLIVER: And I want to have a special thanks to the divisional vice presidents for helping select all those winners.

On a point of personal privilege, I would like to now present you with the 2024-2025 National History Report and book. This includes all the department histories, chairs, reports, historical documents. I want to thank you for encouraging me to research and dig a little deeper, all while leading the way.

Madam President, Trish, this concludes my remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you Dara. She did an amazing job. We spoke so often.

MS. OLIVER: It was epic.

PRESIDENT WARD: It was epic and I will treasure this forever. Everyone knows I love history, and I know we have a lot to do this

afternoon, so I can't dilly dally around up here. But one of the things I'm asked is, what are you going -- what are you going to do?

Well, what I'm going to do is really work on the charter project, and we found a charter signed by every national president. I just didn't have the time to build the document. So that's my project when I get home, and I can't wait.

MS. OLIVER: Love you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: My presidential term began in a very special way, when I was invited to join the family of George Fox, one of the Four Chaplains, on September 4th at Arlington.

Now, at the end of my term, it seems only fitting that I close my term with continued recognition of the Fox family. With the Fox Chapel nearly complete in Gilman, Vermont, here to share some comments about this very special place of worship is the granddaughter of George Fox, Susan Fox Fisk.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. FOX FISK: Hello. I'm honored to be here. My name is Susan Fox Fisk, and I'm a granddaughter of George -- Chaplain George L. Fox, Methodist minister. He was one of the Four Chaplains. There were Chaplain Goode, Chaplain Poling, and Chaplain Washington.

They were on a troop ship going to Greenland when the Dorchester was torpedoed on February 3rd, 1943. The Four Chaplains gave their own life jackets so that others could live, the ultimate sacrifice.

Reverend George L. Fox's last church before going into the Second World War was in the mill town of Gilman, Vermont. He joined the Walter G. Moore Post 41 and was the Vermont state chaplain and historian, which is now named the Moore Fox Post 41.

On April 19th, 2025, Trish Ward joined us and read the -- the charter and induced -- and inducted us into the new American Auxiliary Unit

41. I'm proud to be the secretary and the treasurer for that unit.

We are honored to have had Trish pin us during that service. Thank you to Corrinna Colson for her help in making this happen and continuing to mentor our Moore Fox American Legion Unit 41.

(Applause)

MS. FOX FISK: Our grandmother, Reverend Isadore Fox, was the American Legion Auxiliary National Chaplain 1970 to 1971, and she was a unit president. I remember going to Auxiliary events with her as a child. Grandmother always wanted to have a chapel to honor our grandfather, George L. Fox. As late -- as fate would have it, the Methodist Church in Gilman, Vermont came up for sale, so many organizations helped to purchase the last church that he was the minister; the local Vermont American Legion post and Auxiliary units, as well as the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. Family members, townspeople, and individual donors

across the country gave for us to be able to purchase that church, and we thank you.

The Reverend George L. Fox Chapel are planning to have a museum for articles to honor our grandparents. We are planning to have a community events -- local organizations to come and use the chapel for meetings, workshops -- the sanctuary will schedule weddings and funerals. We'll have an annual service in memory of the Four Chaplains. We would like to have retreats for chapels to come and enjoy our chapel. We are applying for grants and working on fundraising. We thank John Tester, and Corrinna Colson, and our board members for their dedication to this project. Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: This is one of my -- my gift bags and there's a copy put in there for you. Thank you so much.

MS. FOX FISK: Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you for being here. It was one of the highlights of my year to

see that charter in little Gilman, Vermont
rechartered. Well done, Vermont.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I love that story, it
is so inspirational, and I hope Susan is still
here. Please stay up here with me while we bring
out someone who is very passionate about the
Chapel of the Four Chaplains, Bill Kaemmer,
Executive Director of the Chapel of the Four
Chaplains, and my friend, Louie Cavaliere.

(Music played)

MR. KAEMMER: We got walk-up music,
that's great. So I used to be a school teacher,
so I might be here a while. Before I start, a
real quick shout-out -- Wisconsin, that's where I
was born and raised.

(Cheers)

MR. KAEMMER: Moved to Iowa, served in
the Iowa Guard, taught school there for ten
years.

(Cheers)

MR. KAEMMER: Portland, Oregon, I

taught school and served in the Guard ten years.

(Cheers)

MR. KAEMMER: Washington, D.C., that's where I currently live, and of course, Pennsylvania, where the chapel is located -- there in Philadelphia.

(Cheers)

MR. KAEMMER: So good -- good morning. I'm Bill Kaemmer, the executive director of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation and the Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In -- in the August edition of American Legion Magazine and the National Commander, James A. LaCoursiere Jr. spoke about 250 years of greatness. In 2025, we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Army, and in October and November, the Navy and the Marine Corps will also be celebrating their anniversaries.

Well, on July 29th, there was another anniversary this year; it was the 250th birthday of the Army Chaplain Corps. Since 1943, one corner store -- cornerstone of the Army Chaplain

Corps has been the story of the Four Chaplains; four men of God, all from different religious backgrounds, all called to serve their nation.

I know the story well since I served in the -- served 30 years in the Army Chaplain Corps as a chaplain assistant, had the privilege to walk alongside hundreds of chaplains from all different religious backgrounds. It was truly my honor to serve along these men, men of God, whose mission were [sic] to nurture the living, care for the wounded, and honor the fallen.

Military chaplains bring something to the fight that no other military officer can -- they bring hope. We need a strong Chaplain Corps to support our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard members. Our organization was formed to walk alongside and support their mission. With that said, I want you to know that no organization has walked alongside our organization more than American Legion and American Legion Auxiliary.

Did you know that in 1960, The American

Legion led the way to nominate the Four Chaplains to the Medal of Honor? Well, Congress was not able to do that because they weren't on a battleship. But when the U.S.A.T Dorchester sank on February 3rd, 1943, taking along 672 men, that was the largest loss of life on a troop carrier during the war. Even so, 230 men survived, and many of them attest that their will to live was based on what they saw the Four Chaplains do.

See, people die in war all the time, but these Four Chaplains gave up their lives to save others. So Chaplain George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark Poling, and John P. Washington made a conscious decision on that day to live their calling and to save others. So Congress did not present the Medal of Honor, but Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960 asked Congress to come up with a medal, so they created this medal and on January -- a cold day in January -- 18th, 1961, the medal of heroism we often refer to as the Medal -- the Chaplain Medal of Honor was presented to the four families -- and I know Mary

(phonetic), their family has one in their home for what they did on that fateful -- fateful morning.

Today chaplain -- or Captain Lou Cavalieri, the vice chairman of the organization and I are proud to present our Legion of Honor Award, based on the original medal of heroism to you national commander, Trish Ward, who leads -- the American Legion mission is, in the spirit of -- in the spirit of service, not self. So at this time, we'd like to present our Bronze Medallion to Trish Ward.

(Applause)

MR. KAEMMER: If you'll stand right there.

So as Lou presents this -- as the Legion of Honor Bronze Medallion to Trish Ward, National President American Legion Auxiliary, 2025 National Convention. In recognition of your lifetime of service to all people, regardless of race or faith, this symbol -- this award symbolizes, for all Americans, for all time, the

unity of this nation founded upon the fatherhood of one God.

(Applause)

MR. KAEMMER: Nothing happens in the military unless you take a picture, so there you go.

(Laughter)

MR. KAEMMER: We always say in the -- in the Chaplain Corps, and all throughout the military, you often see challenge coins. And challenge coins aren't given, they're always earned, so we have a beautiful challenge coin here with the Four Chaplains on one side and the medal of heroism on the other side. Job well done this year, ma'am.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you so much, Bill. I know what this story means to me.

MR. KAEMMER: I do want to make one quick other presentation and an invitation to you all. So is your chaplain on stage, Chaplain Batiste? Come forward, please. Where are all my chaplains from the states? Just real quickly --

stand up, real quick. Do you have chaplains for your -- OK.

(Applause)

MR. KAEMMER: Like I said, the chaplains play a key role in all the organizations, one of which -- they often do afford chaplain service for us, but they really are kind of the heart and soul of the organization. So normally I only give this coin out if you come preach in my chapel, but I'm going to make an exception here today. So I'm going to give you the smaller coin -- or Lou will present this to you. That's the challenge coin, and then I'm going to give you a larger version of this. This is the one you would get if you actually came to my chapel and preach but we'll --

(Laughter)

MR. KAEMMER: -- we'll set that up for another day. There you go. All right. And we'll give you a certificate here, so you want to face that gentleman there?

Mary, get in here.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Can we get a group shot, Travis (phonetic)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

PRESIDENT WARD: Oh. Thank you.

MR. KAEMMER: Here, we'll get in between the good-looking guys here.

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm up for that.

MR. KAEMMER: All right.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you for everything.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. KAEMMER: And finally, I'm going to let Lou make a few comments, but I just want to let you know that in 2026 -- is the 75th anniversary of the chapel in Philadelphia. So that was formed as a living monument to the story of the Four Chaplains -- so it moved from Temple University to the Navy Yard, so -- in Philadelphia, please come and visit us. Our

website, I think, was up there for a while. So it is the 75th anniversary; we challenge you all, maybe to become a member of the chapel, and I know you do a lot of good things in your community. If you plan a Four Chaplain event, please do so, and if I have an opportunity, invite me, and I'll come try to join you. So thank you for your time today.

MR. CAVALIERE: Actually, it's good to be back up here. I always say that the enthusiasm of this room is twice what you got in the room next door.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIERE: So Bill said that he'd invite everybody to come to visit us at the chapel, and Trish actually did that. She was a guest of the New Jersey delegation, and they brought it to the chapel --

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIERE: -- which is right across the river, so I'm going to challenge

Pennsylvania to do that next year.

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIERE: And I want to say that, Trish, you are an amazing person, and if anybody epitomizes getting a Bronze Medallion from the Chapel of Four Chaplains for selfless service, it is you.

(Applause)

MR. CAVALIERE: One of the things I found out about Trisha is that she likes Peanuts. And at first, I thought it was peanuts, you know, that you eat, but it's actually Peanuts, the Charles Schulz character.

(Laughter)

MR. CAVALIERE: And the reason why she likes Charles Schulz and Peanuts is because Charles Schulz said, you can be yourself, and Trish, you are yourself; you're an amazing person. You've done great work here at the American Legion Auxiliary, and we expect great work in the future because we want to work with you to keep the story of the Four Chaplains out

there. So thank you very much for all you do,
and please come and visit us; we're there in
Philadelphia. Bye-bye.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Lou for
those kind words. There definitely is not enough
time for me to talk about what I've learned about
the Chapel of the Four Chaplains and our Four
Chaplains; I have many, many, many stories.
Regretfully, I can't tell them now, but I will,
soon. Chaplains bring spiritual guidance,
emotional support, and love to every situation.
They remind us how important it is to connect and
show compassion for each other.

Please welcome National Chaplain
Monique Batiste, here to present the national
chaplain report.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. BATISTE: Good morning, Madam
President. This year, I asked everyone to join
me on a journey of faith. Why? In life, as you

meet people, you learn many things about them. Oftentimes, they are hurting, grieving, confused, even afraid, and unsure, and sometimes the only way to navigate through those things is by having a little faith. Whether it's our personal lives or American Legion Auxiliary related, we're all faced with challenges that can make us second-guess ourselves.

The chaplain is the spiritual leader; they give comfort, support, and encouragement. During what we call the Chaplain's Chat, department chaplains met quarterly to share ideas, their upcoming events, resources, and tools. Our spiritual journey with our members is unique. It allows us to be vulnerable, strong, and give grace. We've honored and celebrated the lives of many veterans, Auxiliary and Legion family members, as well as our own family and friends.

Members from the Department of Colorado sent flowers to auxiliary members who lost loved ones, implemented the Buddy Check system every

Monday, and even held bible studies twice a month. The Department of Virginia's unit chaplains understood the chaplain provides encouragement, inspiration, and support.

They are accomplishing these things -- these responsibilities with creativity, resourcefulness, and dedication. One of Virginia's highlights this year was their very first Four Chaplains ceremony held at Unit 175. We all know the story of the Four Chaplains, but hearing it in person from family and friends of the Four Chaplains is totally different experience.

National President Trish Ward, National Sons of Legion Cmdr. Joseph Navarrete, and I were invited to attend the annual Four Chaplains Banquet and visit the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia in February. Celebrating the lives of four brave individuals who sacrificed so much for others was an unforgettable, yet humbling experience.

In difficult times, we look to God for

strength, and this year was a test of strength and faith as we said goodbye to past national presidents Lib Stewart and Peggy Thomas. If you had a chance to live -- to -- an opportunity to spend time with Peggy, you were blessed. She gave you wisdom and she gave it to you straight, with a shot of comedy. Peggy just wanted us all to be great.

I'll leave you with one final nugget; God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the call. Some of us are called to lead, some of us are called to follow, and some of us are called to execute. Keep believing in you, because the only person you are in competition with is you. Keep the faith.

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: Madam President, Trish, I received many, many, many prayers from many of the departments, and we've watched you lead -- lead the way, so today I present you with this leading the way book of prayers.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. That's

beautiful.

(Applause)

MS. BATISTE: Oh, you want to take it?
Oh, we'll take it -- let's finish our
presentation.

And this lead the way prayer throw.
So to -- yes. This is the right way.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

MS. BATISTE: Your book of prayers also
includes every opening and closing prayer from
this year's NEC meetings. This has been an epic
journey, and I am honored God chose me to share
it with you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you so much.
Monique has done an amazing job this year, as
have all of our chaplains.

Yes. Yes. Look, there's a sunflower.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Travis.

Thank you.

MS. BATISTE: Madam President, this concludes my platform remarks.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you again, Monique.

As national presidents, we get the privilege and honor of leading the American Legion Auxiliary for a year. When that year of service is complete, we begin our next chapter of leadership and join the esteemed ranks of Past National Presidents. Each Past National President serves as a link in a chain that spans over 100 years. When that chain is broken, we feel the loss profoundly and deeply. Today, we will celebrate the lives of two Past National Presidents, Elizabeth Stewart and Peggy Thomas. Past National Presidents Diane Duscheck and Linda Newsome are here to lead us in celebration.

(Music played)

MS. DUSCHECK: Elizabeth Stewart, Lib, a lifelong resident of Kings Mountain, North

Carolina, passed away on February 20th at age 91. Lib joined the Kings Mountain unit through the service of two of her brothers, Herman and Ralph. Lib and her brother Gary, both shown here, were at one time the other -- the only brother and sister team in North Carolina to coedit a biweekly newspaper. She worked on the newspaper from 1952 to 1998, retiring only briefly to run for national president, but returned to the newspaper in 2001.

Prior to becoming national president, Lib worked on numerous Auxiliary committees and served as national historian, Southern Division vice president, and national parliamentarian. Lib's theme was Celebrate America 2000 as we moved into a new century. To honor the past, her division vice presidents asked Lib if they could periodically wear pillbox hats and gloves, like Auxiliary members wore at the inception of the organization. Lib responded, we could whatever we wanted to do as long as we didn't embarrass her.

(Laughter)

MS. DUSCHECK: Lib challenged members to be patriotic, to care enough to question, to love our country enough to say no or stop if its leaders do something we believe to be against its best interests; to help our neighbor, to not sit back passively. She began her speeches with, quote, "By the grace of God and a mammogram, I'm an 11-year cancer survivor", unquote. The National President's special project was breast cancer awareness and promotion of mammograms.

President Lib participated in a repatriation ceremony at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii, attended events in Seoul, Korea, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, and rekindled the flame in Paris at the Arc de Triomphe. Lib presided over the 80th National Convention in Milwaukee, where the year's successes were celebrated. The button chair was used to raise funds for breast cancer. Each button represented a woman who is either a victim or victor of

breast cancer, and each represented a unique story of courage and strength.

Members raised over \$35,000 for breast cancer awareness to support research, or for women who couldn't afford treatments or mammograms. The Auxiliary raised nearly \$1 million for World War II memorial, and Lib was able to present a check to Senator Bob Dole. Brigadier General Wilma Vaught thanked the Auxiliary for their years of donations of over \$211,000 to the Military Women's Memorial, and units and departments gave scholarships valued at almost \$1.3 million.

The Heart of America National Media Awards honored journalists and broadcasters whose work made positive contributions to America, women, and families. One of the winners highlighted ten brothers and sisters trying to remain a family within the foster care network, and the couple who adopted all ten of them.

In Kings Mountain, Lib was active in fundraising campaigns, served on mayoral

committees, and received a Distinguished Woman Award. She was the state president of the North Carolina Press Women and was honored by the governor with the highest award given to a civilian in the state. Lib's dedication and commitment to her country, state, and community was unprecedented and will be greatly missed. Farewell, Lib.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Diane. And now, please welcome Past National President Linda Newsome.

(Applause)

MS. NEWSOME: Peggy I. Thomas was born October 31, 1933, in Gladesboro, Virginia, and died April 24th, 2025, but what about those 90-plus in-between years? Who was she during that time? Well, she was raised in a small town, the seventh of nine children. She graduated high school and married John Carter Thomas. They had a daughter, Lisa, and eventually Lisa married Kevin, but she was Mom.

Peggy attended West Virginia Business College, where she studied accounting. Upon her graduation, she was employed by a petroleum distributorship, who considered her indispensable. Her work ethic led her to reach the high level of corporate vice president. She joined the American Legion Auxiliary through the eligibility of her husband, John. Peggy joined the Auxiliary to spend her time and energy aiding the active military veterans and their families.

Her goals were high; she believed in the organization. She volunteered her time at the VA medical centers and visited service members in South Korea and Germany, amongst others. She traveled through the States and met with our members, but that is only part of what she did.

(Video played)

MS. THOMAS: Thank you for the hard work and dedication in serving our veterans, the military, and their families. Keep up the good work and continue to ask everyone you know to

join us in serving those who have so bravely served their country.

(Video ended)

MS. NEWSOME: Who was she -- is deeper. She was kind, she -- she advised and mentored new leaders, and her dry humor was a hoot. There were times when she used her humor on me, and I wasn't sure if it was humor or if she was serious.

(Laughter)

MS. NEWSOME: Peggy's special project was the Children of Warriors National Presidents' Scholarship fund; the goal was \$39,000. At the 2013 National Convention, Peggy reported monies raised were more than twice her goal. As one of our Past National Presidents told me, and I quote, "Peggy was a dear friend to all; a mentor, funny, witty, and always had a smile", and another who said, we lost a great friend. I am so sad but remembering all the good times, and how grateful I am to have been her friend. and from Diane, and I quote, "When I was" present --

"president, Peggy gave me a driving tour of Monument Avenue, a street that was lined with Confederate monuments. Peggy reminded me, more than once, that the South will rise again", unquote.

(Laughter)

MS. NEWSOME: Peggy was a teacher. She encouraged members to take leadership roles, and she taught them not to quit. She taught teamwork and respect for authority. She lived the values she taught, and she was a good friend. Peggy was a constant in my life. I was fortunate that many years ago, she agreed to become the Past National Presidents' group secretary. The Past National Presidents, and particularly me, appreciated the knowledge and friendship that she brought to our group.

And just like that company that hired her after graduating college and considered her indispensable, the American Legion Auxiliary too will feel that void, as she was indispensable to our organization, as well as our personal lives.

Peggy, we will miss your smile, your knowledge,
and your friendship.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I want to thank Diane
and Linda for bringing that special memory to us
here today. For those of us who knew Lib and
Peggy, we will never, ever forget them, and this
national president will never forget them. I am
pleased to introduce the members of the dedicated
Resolutions Committee, Tracy Kinnick, chairman,
Desi Stoy, member.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. KINNICK: Thank you, Madam
President. Today we have three resolutions of
support and one courtesy resolution. Courtesy
resolution number 1 for Amwins.

"Whereas, Amwins has been and remains a
faithful partner to the American Legion Auxiliary
and its member. Amwins is a leading global
specialty insurance distributor and continues to
provide ALA members with the most cost-effective

options and comprehensive coverage. Whereas, Amwins is a generous sponsor of the Wall of Heroes initiative to honor veterans and service members. Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary express its sincere appreciation to our partners at Amwins for your unwavering dedication to delivering tailored insurance solutions to meet the unique needs of our military families, that reflect the highest standards of professionalism and care."

Courtesy resolution number 2 for USAA.

"Whereas, USAA" is a -- "is dedicated to providing tailored banking solutions that meet the unique needs of our military personnel and their families, that reflect the highest standards of excellence and integrity. Through USAA's innovative financial products, personalized customer service, and steadfast support of military families, they have demonstrated a deep understanding of the sacrifices made by our service members. Whereas, USAA is a generous member benefits

provider of the American Legion Auxiliary and is committed to empowering our community with financial stability and security.

"Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary extends our sincere gratitude and commends USAA for their continued support. Your partnership in ensuring the financial well-being of our service members and their family members is invaluable, and we are grateful for your unwavering dedication to those who serve our country."

Courtesy resolution number 3 for the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation.

"Whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation has contributed liberally and consistently from the fiscal resources to the American Legion Auxiliary programs like ALA Girls Nation and the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival. Whereas, the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation continues to use veteran project funds and Veterans Creative Arts Festival grants to empower units and departments" to forego

partner -- "to forge partnerships with their local veterans service organizations and VA facilities to fund community projects.

"Resolved, that the American Legion Auxiliary offers its profound thanks to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation for their financial commitment to bettering the lives of veterans, military, and their families."

Resolution 4. Whereas, the delegate -- "the dedicated delegates, alternates, and guests have gathered in Tampa, Florida for the ALA 104th National Convention to hear the accomplishments of the world's largest patriotic auxiliary organization, and to show their dedication in in their membership, serving heroes and mission outreach efforts. Resolved, that this courtesy resolution express our heartfelt appreciation and grateful thanks to" all the -- "all named in this resolution who share time with us. And be it further resolved, we express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to this extraordinary woman, American Legion Auxiliary National President

Trish Ward, by giving her a standing ovation, demonstrating our love, support, and pride in all her accomplishments."

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: I'm going to cry. I'm trying not to cry.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I love you.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you all.

MS. KINNICK: Let's show our appreciation with another round of applause and let the resolutions be adopted.

(Applause)

MS. KINNICK: Oh, I totally read your line. Madam President, this concludes the resolution report. Thank you.

PRESIDENT WARD: With your applause, the resolutions have been adopted, no keypad voting here.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you, Tracy, and the Resolutions Committee. They did some work this past couple of days, didn't they?

(Laughter)

PRESIDENT WARD: Our Distinguished Guests Committee is not -- our Resolutions Committee is not the only group working hard behind the scenes at convention; let's give a big hand to our Distinguished Guests Committee. As I -- Past National President Desireé Stoy, chairman; Past National President Vicki Koutz, member; Past National President Mary Davis, member; they kept the green room up and going.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: They're pretty awesome and epic. Would Tracy Kinnick from the Department of Kansas please come to the podium and present the national president's scrapbook.

MS. KINNICK: Madam President, your scrapbook is in the works, but it cannot be completed and given to you until we get this epic ALA 104th National Convention in the book.

PRESIDENT WARD: Fantastic. Thank you, Tracy. I appreciate all you do for me.

(Applause)

MS. KINNICK: Yes. I appreciate what you've done.

PRESIDENT WARD: I want pictures from this convention in that book, so I appreciate her diligence, she's been a dear friend, and I'm so grateful that she accepted this responsibility.

(Music played)

VOICEOVER: With great pride, the American Legion Auxiliary presents the National President's Award for Excellence, an honor bestowed upon our best of the best. This award embodies our core value of *Service Not Self*, by recognizing extraordinary efforts in mission outreach programs, with special emphasis on this year's -- on those who are truly leading the way.

Here to present to -- your National President Trish Ward, and the 2024-2025 national division vice presidents: Eastern Division National Vice President Lauren Lloyd, Central Division National Vice President Rosemarie Hauck, and Northwestern Division National Vice President Debra Albers.

(Applause)

VOICEOVER: Also, Southern Division National Vice President Cheryl Shine and Western Division National Vice President Beverly Eads.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The National President's Award for Excellence serves as a prestigious honor, recognizing outstanding contributions that propel an organization's mission forward. Today, five high achieving units and one exemplary department will be recognized for their impactful work across a range of fields. Their contributions are shaping the future and inspiring others; we are so excited to celebrate them. Rosemarie Hauck, will you get this party started?

(Music played)

MS. HAUCK: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

MS. HAUCK: Our first award of the day honors the unwavering strength and resilience of

the human spirit in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. At the end of September, Hurricane Helene and Milton devastated this unit's post home. The building was battered -- damaged beyond safe use. They didn't just lose the place to meet, they lost the heart of their physical home, but the spirit of the family never wavered. Together, their Legion family rebuilt the post home, brick by brick, moment by moment -- not just in repairs, but in connection, compassion, and commitment.

From this devastation, their proudest product was born -- Operation Mission Drive, where they grew their membership and renewals by 117 percent -- .72 percent --

(Applause)

MS. HAUCK: -- and over 100 new members. This unit may have lost a building, but they never lost their purpose. Please put your hands together --

(Applause)

MS. HAUCK: -- for the Hugh Gilbert

Strickland Unit 138, Department of Florida.

(Music played)

MS. HAUCK: And a big thank you to the unit president, Don Davis. Thanks for ensuring the Rising Rosies will keep leading the way.

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Lauren Lloyd, are you ready to present the next winner? Please welcome Eastern Division National Vice President from the District of Columbia to the podium, Lauren Lloyd.

(Music played)

MS. LLOYD: Thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you, Rosemarie, and thank you, National President Trish. It's my distinct privilege to present the National President's Award for Excellence to its second unit recipient. Despite their smaller size, this unit exemplifies the spirit of collaboration within the Legion family. This unit was chartered in 1924, and due to lack of participation and interest, they considered turning in their charter; but with a few determined members, they

signed up 20 new members and increased their attendance by 200 percent.

(Applause)

MS. LLOYD: With this unit back on track, they took their community by storm, never wavering on making a difference. This unit touched on all programing aspects of the ALA, from their Christmas in July at the VA, to honoring three young girls with a Youth Hero Award for saving the life of a young man drowning.

In October, this unit, along with the community, recognized and celebrated 102-year-old Dorothy Smith, fondly known as Rosie the Riveter. This hometown hero joined the Navy waves in 1943 and worked to repair American planes during World War II. In celebration of this unit's passion and dedication, it's an honor to welcome them to the stage, Meade Sturgis Unit 333 from the Department of South Dakota.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. LLOYD: Let's show our appreciation with a round of applause for Unit President Carol Edwards, who nominated her unit for this fabulous award.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. LLOYD: Congratulations Unit 333.

OK. Deb, it's your turn. Are you ready to introduce our next winner?

PRESIDENT WARD: Come on down.

(Music played)

MS. ALBERS: Thank you, Lauren. This next unit distinguished itself through outstanding performance through -- across multiple mission outreach programs, showcasing a strong commitment to serving their community. This unit went above and beyond championing National Poppy Day with incredible support from local businesses. Their dedication paid off, raising over \$2,900 for their department, local families in need, and honor flight and school supplies.

Members of this unit actively built brand loyalty and promoted the ALA's mission through various community service projects. Their impactful work includes supporting homeless children through Operation Homefront, providing scholarships to local students, offering grants for medical research to high-achieving doctoral students, and fostering strong relationships with local educators for their Give 10 to Education program.

This unit provided year-round support to our active-duty military members and their families, including Gold Star, White Star, Blue Star families, contributing approximately 195 volunteer hours and \$13,500 in donations. Their commitment to their community is an inspiration to us all, embodying a legacy of service, not self. Our next winning unit is truly deserving. Please welcome to the stage Woods W. Lynch Unit 19 from the Department of Texas.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. ALBERS: A loud -- a round of applause for Jane Bennett, unit chairman, who nominated her unit for this award.

(Music played)

MS. ALBERS: Outstanding work, Unit 19. Presenting our next winner, please welcome Cheryl to the stage. Cheryl? Oh, Cheryl.

MS. SHINE: It is my great honor to present the next award, in recognition of exceptional service and unwavering dedication to the growth and well-being of their community. From Make a Difference Day and recycling programs, to blood drives, food bank donations, and Pinwheel Palooza, tech help from teens, Project Renewal, and baby showers at the pregnancy resource center, just to name a few.

This unit engaged 207 members in a wide range of community projects. Collectively, they contributed over 560 hours of dedicated service throughout their area. In honor of Veterans Day, the unit coordinated visits for veterans at two local schools. ALA members organized classroom

reading sessions featuring their post commander and adjutant, followed by breakfast in the media center as a tribute. Students lined up the hallway waving flags, while the veterans participated in a heartfelt walk through the Hall of the Heroes.

Their initiatives have demonstrated the power of collaboration and community involvement. Please join me in honoring and congratulating Barrett-David-Watson Unit 233, in Loganville, Georgia.

(Applause)

(Music played)

MS. SHINE: And a special thanks to Barbara Wade, unit chairman, for sharing your unit's story.

(Music played)

MS. SHINE: Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition, Unit 233.

OK, Beverly, are you ready to introduce our final unit award winner?

(Music played)

MS. EADS: Thank you, Cheryl. At the heart of their community, this unit shines as a beacon of dedication, service, and compassion, guiding by the motto, service, not self. They work tirelessly year-round to support military families, veterans, children, and those in need. While volunteering numbers may vary, those who step up do so with unwavering passion and commitment, bringing the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary to life every single day.

Community service is the core of this unit's mission. They packed an impressive 555 boxes of produce for local families in need, contributing a remarkable 227 volunteer hours to the effort. Girls State also remains a key focus, with creative fundraising efforts, like hosting a comedy night, enables the sponsorship of those young women for this life-changing experience. Transforming lives and proudly advancing the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary, please join with me in honoring and congratulating the John J. Morris, Unit 62 from

the Department of Arizona.

(Applause)

MS. EADS: A special thanks to Kathy Amery, Department President, for inspiring others for this unit's service.

(Music played)

MS. EADS: A heartfelt -- heartfelt congratulations on your much-deserved recognition.

(Music played)

MS. EADS: Up next is our department winner. The national vice president had the honor of reviewing all the applicants and selecting the winner. Several submissions were received and ultimately, the National Division Vice President Deb Albers removed herself from the judging because the department and her division submitted for an award.

Now to present that award is our National President's Award for Excellence, honoring department winner for their outstanding achievement, exceptional service. Please welcome

back to the stage National President, Trish Ward.

PRESIDENT WARD: Thank you. We absolutely did our best to keep this judging fair and equitable for all that applied, and I want to thank the national division vice presidents for stepping in and making that happen.

This department made it their mission to lead the way through mentoring, training, compliance, and encouragement. They empowered their district presidents by challenging them to mentor and support their units towards success. They provided clear timelines, set deadlines, and maintained consistent communication from the department level. Personal calls were made to each district president to check in and offer support.

Additionally, a boot camp was held for all committee chairs where they received training on their roles and responsibilities, as well as guidance on available resources, and key contacts for further assistance. With the inspiring theme, ride the tide for veterans, make each wave

count, this Department truly made waves. 31 units reached 100 percent membership, and for the first time, the department achieved an overall membership rate of 85 percent.

This department made waves raising funds to bring Lucynt interactive systems into local hospitals through bingo nights, dinner fundraisers, and golf tournaments. Their collective efforts made a tangible impact, successfully securing one system of each for two veterans' homes. Big waves were made at Fort Riley, where 289 families and single soldiers were treated to a heartfelt Thanksgiving dinner, and even received a special visit from Santa during Operation North Pole. This department also raised an impressive \$10,812 through poppy funds, directly supporting the mission to enhance the welfare of our veterans.

This department embraced the mindset of it is what we make it, turning challenges into opportunities and transforming negativity into meaningful action that drives the mission

forward. Please join me in congratulating this department for their outstanding contributions, their commitment to their units, and passion for advocating on behalf of veterans. Please welcome Department of Kansas and Department President Tracy Kinnick.

(Applause)

(Music played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Through their remarkable dedication, these honorees have made a lasting impact on our veterans, their families, and the communities they serve. The outstanding unity among our units exemplifies the power of our Legion family's shared mission, raising this year's awards to extraordinary heights. Through their collective efforts, these honorees embody the strength, spirit, and purpose of our organization, proving that we are truly stronger together as a one united family.

This year's awards, honoring their unwavering commitment to our Leading the Way mission, amplify our collective impact across

communities. We invite everyone to join in extending sincere gratitude and congratulations to this department for their exceptional contributions. Through their dedication and that of the units, they have raised awareness, delivered vital resources, and absolutely offered unwavering support.

As we lead the way ahead, let the spirit of these accomplishments inspire a continued pursuit of excellence in all we do. United as one Legion Family, we will build a lasting legacy honoring the profound sacrifice of those who have served our nation. As we set up for the national president's report, the chair calls on National Secretary Linda Boone to make a few convention updates.

Linda?

MS. BOONE: I know what the number is.

PRESIDENT WARD: You got it?

MS. BOONE: OK. A few -- Idaho department president lost her pin and it's of the oval design, so if anybody finds that -- I'm

going to ask that installation begins at 1:30, and the States Dinner begins at 7 p.m. at the convention center. And to give an update from the foundation and their Wall of Heroes collection, a last -- a last-minute donation took it to Cathy for president -- Foundation President Cathe MacInnes' goal was \$1,000 for each year of the foundation, so they're at \$18,000 --

(Applause)

MS. BOONE: -- which all of you did. And I'd like to remind you that the opportunity doesn't end today. You can go on the website; you can mail in -- whatever. But you know, when we collect, you know, my \$15 with your \$15 and your \$15, we can reach more veterans to help when we go together, and our foundation is a perfect opportunity to do that because it comes back to us, to our programs. It's all about us helping each other, so put the foundation on your Christmas list.

Another -- the staff would like to ask you to please, when we close this afternoon -- or

whenever it is -- to exit the hall quickly so that they can reset up for installation practice. So if you want to visit, go outside the doors, please. Madam President, I think that's it.

PRESIDENT WARD: Fantastic. Thank you so much, Linda.

This year has been epic and awesome. I've traveled to 52 departments, six countries, met incredible members, joined the Legion and Sons in countless collaborations, received the highest-level briefing from Brigadier General Adrian Williams, the 86th Airlift Wing commander at Ramstein Air Force Base, and from Colonel Warren Stewart, commander of Ramstein -- of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. They say a picture speaks 1,000 words, let's see what a video can say.

(Video played)

PRESIDENT WARD: Hello, American Legion Auxiliary family. I'm Trish Ward, American Legion Auxiliary National President, 2024-2025, and here we are in Tampa Bay, Florida. How

quickly time flies when you're working with our veterans, celebrating all that you do, and enjoying your success on behalf of our great mission -- our legacy of service, not self. And we do it in so many ways. It's who we are and it's how we show our communities, our kids, our veterans why the American Legion family is so important and so valued today more than ever.

For God and country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes. As I think about that line, I remember the time I spent in support of George Fox, one of the immortal Four Chaplains at Arlington, with his family. He was a man of God, as were the other three chaplains who gave their life on the Dorchester so that others could live. As our preamble states, for God and country, and I think about that moment, it was an amazing opportunity to bring the first line of our preamble to life.

To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. We spent time in our country's capital, Washington, D.C.,

advocating for our veterans to make sure that the promises we make to them are upheld by those who lead legislations and who are advocates for our veterans.

To maintain law and order. We support our first responders in National Night Out. The men and women who are there for us in our communities, to make sure that they have citizens who understand the importance of being ready at a moment's notice. It's been a difficult year -- hurricanes, floods, fires -- and our law enforcement and the people who are first responders, are there for our members and our citizens, and we're there for them.

To foster and perpetuate a 100 percent Americanism. And we do this in so many ways, by honoring and supporting our flag, and by making sure our children understand the importance of being good citizens. Our Americanism program encourages our members and citizens to make sure that the symbols that matter to us -- our banner, Old Glory -- is front and center in everything we

do.

To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars. And we do that by supporting our service members from all conflicts. As I spent time in Pearl Harbor, it was amazing to witness some of our World War II veterans who are still active and engaged, to assure that that special day on December 7th is never forgotten. All our conflicts -- the global war on terror, the Korean conflict, Vietnam, and so many of the conflicts that we've been involved in as a country, the American Legion family is there to make sure that they are never forgotten.

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation. As I've traveled the country, I've had the opportunity to speak to so many members and they asked me, what's your favorite thing? Well, it's a tough one to answer because I have a favorite thing in every department, but one thing that stands out is a visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Alabama.

This beautiful area honors and remembers a part of Alabama's history that's difficult to speak about, but the young people that were there made sure that the future is bright and that people have awareness on history so that it's not repeated. I stood where Martin Luther King stood, and I saw the overview in this beautiful community. I remind people as I travel and I believe it, if you don't look like me or pray like me or love like me, that's OK. If you want to support veterans, we have a place for you here.

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses. As a member of the American Legion Auxiliary, we stand together and aligned with no rank to support our mission of supporting veterans and their families, regardless of background. Here in the American Legion Auxiliary, if you're eligible -- and even if you're not -- we welcome and encourage your support.

To make right the master of might. A

call to action for our American Legion Auxiliary family to come together, do what's right, make certain that our mission is front and center, and that the activities that we prioritize are the ones that make a difference for those who really matter -- the people we serve, our kids, our veterans, and our members.

To promote peace and goodwill on Earth. I think about the time I spent in Maryland with our beautiful juniors and the members from the Department of Maryland; how all those kids came together, and the team donated hundreds of pairs of pajamas to give to children in the local hospitals. To promote peace and goodwill on Earth. So much by giving back to others who maybe need a little hand up; that's what the American Legion Auxiliary does.

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom, and democracy. Spending time in Washington, D.C. was life changing. I laid the wreath with the American Legion family, and I had the opportunity

to enjoy a few days for the inauguration of the President of our country, and of course -- spending time with TAPS, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors to be able to support the people who have lost so much -- a family member who's passed in service to our country, or maybe someone who served our country and they're struggling with grief. We support the opportunity to safeguard these people and make sure that they're never forgotten -- to transmit to posterity.

To participate in and contribute to the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of The American Legion. Our Be The One mission reminds us as an American Legion Family, that we will forever support veterans who are struggling and need an extra lift up. We make sure that a veteran who's having a mental health challenge knows it's OK to not be OK. Cmdr. LaCoursiere, Cmdr. Navarreté, and I are committed to ensuring that in this year, that mission was front and center to many things that we did.

To consecrate and sanctify our association by our devotion to mutual helpfulness. We accomplished so much together and work to support our great mission and our legacy of *Service Not Self*. This national president has had an amazing time enjoying and witnessing all the success that our members accomplish across the country. We will continue to lead the way to excellence today, tomorrow, and forever.

(Video ends)

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: As I prepare to step into a new chapter, I'm taking with me everything I've learned this past year and applying it to future opportunities for mission delivery. Some people have called this moment bittersweet; I call this moment brilliant. My story does not end here, it's just the beginning. Supporting our mission is my life's work, passion, and purpose. So I stand excited, ready, and future-focused to take the experience -- experiences

I've had and the things I've learned and apply them, to ensure we remain the premier veterans service organization on behalf of our members and those we serve.

Every experience, every challenge, and every success has prepared me to explore new arenas, all in the service of strengthening and uplifting the ALA. I've loved this role and the opportunity to work alongside such incredible members. At the same time, I'm genuinely excited to see what's next for me and this great organization.

The favorite question lately is, are you ready? Of course I'm ready; this was always a one-year opportunity to drive leadership, awareness, and growth for our organization as its National President. Part of leadership is setting the next team up for success and giving them their space to lead. That is what leading the way theme was all about, and that's what we will continue to do.

Thank you for your guidance, your

partnership, and your unwavering commitment to our values and mission. I leave inspired, grateful, and more motivated than ever to see the ALA lead the way today, tomorrow, and forever.

(Applause)

PRESIDENT WARD: The 2025 National Convention stands adjourned sine die.

(Music played)

(Whereupon, the 2025 American Legion Auxiliary National Convention was adjourned).